# Guidance for Case Reports and Case Series

Case Reports and case series are common and traditional forms of research publication. Although not considered to be an optimal type of evidence, they play an important role in pointing out important disease features, identifying possible associations and may be an impetus to ideas which lead to more formal research designs. Given that by design, case reports and case series involve small numbers of patients who are often described in considerable detail, there are important issues around protection of personal information and informing participants which are unique to this form of research.

In order to address these issues, the following guidelines are provided for authors of case reports and case series involving IWK Health Centre patients:

1. It is recommended that manuscripts be submitted to the Research Ethics Board (REB). This will be an expedited process, where the manuscript will be reviewed by one of the committee chairs. The REB will then provide a letter of support (not a formal approval) for the manuscript which can be provided to the publishing journal.
2. Efforts must be taken to minimize the amount of personal information contained within the report. It is recognized that details are a required feature of this type of publication, but those details which do not advance the science of the report should be omitted (e.g. initials).
3. Where clinical images are used, reasonable efforts should be taken to protect the identity of the individual shown. For example, avoid showing the patient’s face if it is not integral to the feature being demonstrated. Placing a “black bar” across the subject’s eyes is not an acceptable substitute**.**
4. Individuals who are the subject of a case report or small case series, or their parent/legal guardian should be given the opportunity to review the final manuscript. They should also have the right to request reasonable changes.
5. If possible, consent should be obtained from the individual involved in the case report or small case series, or their parent/legal guardian. This may be waived in some circumstances where consent is impossible or inappropriate, but this must be justified. A recommended consent form follows.

For additional information:

Shevell, MI. The Ethics of Case Reports/ Paediatric Child Health 2004;9(2):83-84. Perlman M. Ethics and the Publication of Research. Paediatric Child Health 2003;8(4).

# Consent to be Included in a Case Report or Case Series

1. I understand that information about me, which may include information about illnesses or medical problems that I may have, has been used in a Case Report or Case Series that will be published and be available to other people, including health care professionals and the general public.
2. I have had the opportunity to review the final manuscript and agree to my inclusion in this publication.
3. I understand that efforts will be made to limit the identifying information that is contained in the publication. However, I also understand that details included in the publication could identify me. This could affect my ability to obtain medical insurance or work in certain jobs.
4. I have reviewed my photographs of me that are part of the Case Report/Case Series and agree to their publication.
5. I have been provided a copy of this Consent form.

Who can I contact for more information?

<Include name and contact information for someone who can provide information about the report>

Signature of Participant Name (printed) Date

Signature of Person Name (printed) Date Obtaining Consent