

HSC OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE NEWSLETTER

Ethical Research leads to Quality Outcomes



What's Happening in the ORC?

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Find the latest updates on all areas of the ORC, including the IACUC, the NTR IRB, and RCOI.

Team Spotlight – “Best Of” Edition!

This quarter we posed a question to our ORC team members.

How to Get to the “Yes”

In this quarter’s issue, we’ll help you get to the “Yes” by ensuring researchers have the appropriate training.

You've Got Questions, We've Got Answers!

In this issue, we answer questions about the ORC and what we do.

What to Know About the Condition of Caring Too Much: When Caring Leads to Compassion Fatigue

In this special article, we take a look back at compassion fatigue: what it is, how to identify if you may be experiencing it, and what to do to prevent or mitigate it.

ORC Calendar

Find all of the meeting and deadline dates for the next three months of Board and Committee meetings.

Welcome to 2025! We hope that the first couple of months of the year are off to a great start for all!

For the first edition of our newsletter for this new calendar year, we bring you a special “Best Of” edition of our ORC Newsletter where we bring back some of our favorite articles from the last few years.

The last quarter of 2024 and first few months of 2025 have been a busy time for our office:

ORC Staffing Updates:

- Christina Aguilar, who worked in our IACUC Office since 2016, left HSC in November 2024 to pursue other opportunities. We wish her all the best!
- Our beloved Sr. Administrative Coordinator, Joycelyn Bryant, moved to a new role in November 2024 within the HSC Office of Research Security and International Compliance (ORSIC)! Although we are sad that Joycelyn is not officially in the ORC anymore, we are excited that we can all continue to work with her in her new role!
- We were also excited to welcome a new team member in February 2025 – Victoria Porter started as our ORC Business Coordinator! She is off to a great start, so make sure to congratulate her if you call our office or stop by. 😊
- For those of you that regularly work with the IRB and IACUC, keep an eye out for new names and faces over the next few weeks as we have some new colleagues joining our team.

As you may have heard, there have been some leadership changes within the Division of Research & Innovation. Although it was sad to say farewell to a few people, we are excited to have Dr. Dimitrios Karamichos in the role of Vice President, Research and Graduate Studies.

AAHRPP Accreditation Update! Many in our human subject research community may remember that the North Texas Regional IRB was in the process of obtaining initial accreditation from the Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs (AAHRPP). After almost a year-and-a-half of intense work, we are thrilled to announce that HSC and the NTR IRB received FULL accreditation in December! This is a huge achievement for our institution and is sure to help further our research collaborations in the future!

Spring cleaning – for IRB protocols! A friendly reminder to please notify the NTR IRB regarding the closure of a study once it's completed or in data analysis only (i.e., no possibility of re-initiating subject recruitment, the intervention is complete, and research data have been completely de-identified). This guidance is applicable to Exempt, Expedited and Full Board projects. Note that while a study (including those deemed as Exempt) remains open it is eligible for audits under the Post-Approval Monitoring program. We highly encourage researchers to review their list of projects, especially those deemed as either Exempt or Expedited with no annual review, and close out projects that are no longer active. To close out a study, please complete the applicable Final Report/Close-Out Form, available on the [NTR IRB website](#), and submit within IRBNet.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT: CONGRATULATIONS to our colleague, **Stacy Abraham**, for being awarded one of the inaugural “Lighting the Way” awards! We are so proud of our team member for being recognized as an example and leader in living our values on a daily basis. Please reach out and congratulate Ms. Abraham when you get a chance!

“Best Of” Edition – Learn More About the ORC Team!

The ORC has a great mix of talented and knowledgeable individuals who strive to help our research community meet complex (and sometimes confusing!) compliance regulations and requirements on a daily basis. As any ORC member will tell you, it takes a lot of hard work, dedication and grit to work in a compliance office. Here, our ORC team members share some advice for their past selves, as well as for future colleagues!

Question: What advice would you give to yourself on your first day here?

Stacy Abraham, IRB Compliance Manager:

“Be ok with not knowing things or not being the best at your job right away! It will come with time as long as you are persistent. Don’t be afraid to ask questions and most importantly, believe that you have what it takes to do this job well.”

Megan Adams-Courtney, Research Compliance Coordinator:

“Don’t be nervous, learn all you can, give your best effort, and don’t worry they all like chocolate!”

Tania Ghani, Executive Director for the ORC:

“In the words of Dory (from Finding Nemo) - ‘Just keep swimming!’ Things may seem tough/confusing right now, but you will make it through and will come out better on the other side.”

Amanda Oglesby, IRB Compliance Manager:

“Focus on the main concepts (big-picture items) and be less concerned with minute details.”

Itzel Peña Pérez, Director of the NTR IRB:

“Be willing to learn, listen and adapt.”

Victoria Porter, Research Compliance Business Coordinator:

“The advice I would give my past self on my first day of work at UNT HSC is to print a campus map and carry it with me at all times. There will often be times when you need to go to a different building for a meeting, and I’ve experienced several situations where I mistakenly thought one building was another. Having a printed campus map would help eliminate confusion regarding the acronyms we use at UNT HSC, as the map clearly indicates the locations of the different buildings.”

Jeanne Priddy, Sr. IACUC Administrator:

“Be more outgoing from day 1. It’s a wonderful group of people, don’t be shy.”

How to Get to the Yes

Training for Researchers

It’s a pretty familiar scene...you’ve prepared the draft of your research protocol and hit the submit button...only to get a comment back that either you and/or members of your study team have not completed (or submitted) the appropriate trainings. Now what?

Fear not! The Office of Research Compliance (which includes the HSC IACUC, the North Texas Regional IRB, and Research Conflict of Interest) has outlined the specific trainings you (or your research staff) need to complete before engaging in research (for either Animal Researchers or Human Subject Researchers). Trainings typically include completion of modules in CITI, institutional requirements, and may also include other components, such as Occupational Health and trainings through the Department of Lab Animal Medicine (DLAM; please note these last two areas would be required for animal research only).

General Reminders:

- “CITI” stands for the “Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative” – this is an external organization that provides research, ethics, and compliance trainings. Please note that ORC staff are not able to assist with resolving issues regarding CITI accounts or access – researchers should contact CITI directly for help with these types of issues.
- Individuals should not be added onto a study until they have completed all of their necessary trainings as such, please do not submit a new study or an amendment to an existing study to add personnel until individuals have completed all appropriate trainings. NOTE: It’s important to remain current with the appropriate training(s) (and avoid lapses) while engaged in research.

- All HSC individuals engaged in research are required to complete the Research Conflict of Interest training and disclosure form prior to involvement in a research project, and at least annually thereafter (this is done in conjunction with the annual Research Conflict of Interest disclosure). Additionally, any changes in disclosure status which affect the research project (financial or otherwise) need to be reported within 30 days of the change occurring. Please note that this requirement applies whether the project is funded or unfunded. **NOTE: HSC individuals involved in or engaged in research are defined as personnel including, but not limited to, administrators, faculty, staff, post-doctoral fellows, students, interns, residents, collaborators, subcontractors or consultants whose institutional responsibilities include the design, conduct or reporting of research, funded, unfunded or proposed for funding.**

For additional information on the specific trainings to complete prior to engagement in a research study, please visit:

- (for Animal Researchers) [Animal Researcher Personnel Training Requirements](#)
- (for Human Subject Researchers) [Human Subject Research Training for North Texas Regional IRB Researchers](#)

For information regarding Research Conflict of Interest, please visit: [HSC Research Conflict of Interest](#)

You've Got Questions, We've Got Answers!

If you've ever had the question "What IS the Office of Research Compliance?" or "What does the Office of Research Compliance actually DO?", you're in luck! This past April, our office had the opportunity to answer questions like these on Research Café with our presentation, "Getting to the Yes: How to Navigate the Research Compliance Regulatory Landscape". In this introductory presentation we covered the scope of our office, including what each sub-area does and what investigators need to know about working with each section of the ORC.

To recap, our office includes the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), Research Conflict of Interest (RCOI), the North Texas Regional Institutional Review Board (NTR IRB), Research Integrity, and Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR). If you missed the presentation, you can click [here](#) to watch a recording; or, for a more in-depth look at our office, check out our [website](#).

Every month, Research Café virtually hosts a different speaker covering different topics relevant to researchers at all levels. You can find Zoom links for upcoming Research Cafés and watch recordings from previous months on their [webpage](#)!

Any other general questions or not sure where to start? You can visit our [Office of Research Compliance webpage](#), call us at 817-735-0409, or email us at Research.Compliance@unthsc.edu.

We look forward to hearing from you!! 😊

Have a question you would like answered? Just click the link below to submit your question.

[Have a Question?](#)

What to Know About the Condition of Caring Too Much: When Caring Leads to Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue has been dubbed “the cost of caring” by traumatologist Dr. Charles Figley. In his book *Compassion Fatigue in the Animal-Care Community*, Dr. Figley writes that it is “the deep physical, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion that can result from working day to day in an intense caregiving environment.” Also known as Secondary Traumatic Stress, compassion fatigue can affect anyone working in a caregiving role. It can impact those who work with humans like healthcare professionals, teachers, or lawyers. It can also affect those who work with animals like veterinarians, zookeepers, and animal control officers. People who work in research, whether with humans or animals, are not immune to compassion fatigue.

Compassion fatigue can come about when the lines between work and personality become blurred. The sufferer will often wrap their self-worth in what they are doing in their career, often causing a struggle to remove who they are as a person from their career and especially from those in their care, leading to emotional exhaustion. This blending of personal and professional identities makes recognizing the symptoms crucial.

Learning to recognize the signs of compassion fatigue early will allow the sufferer to take steps towards improving their mental health. Identifying both mental and physical symptoms can be the first step towards seeking help. By understanding these warning signs, individuals can begin to implement strategies for self-care and seek professional support if needed. Some mental symptoms include:

- Lowered Concentration
- Feelings of Helplessness
- Irritability or Anger
- Depression
- Feeling Detached
- Reduced Empathy

Some physical symptoms include:

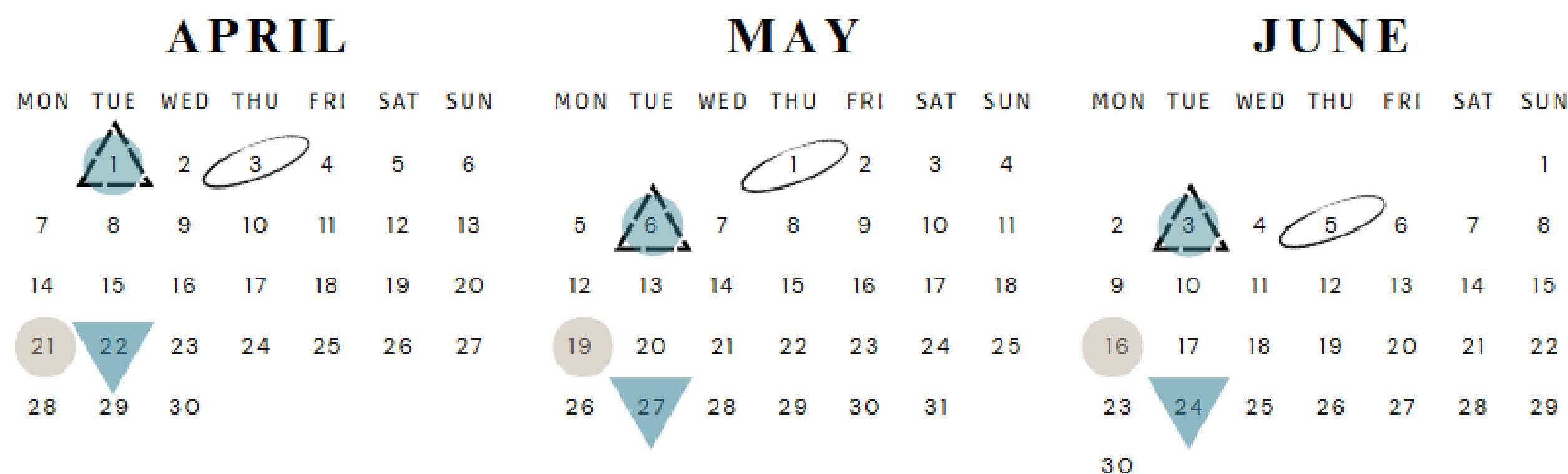
- Physical Pain
- Exhaustion
- Poor Sleep
- Headaches
- Nausea
- Dizziness

Prevention and mitigation are incredibly important for helping those suffering from compassion fatigue. An early preventative step is workplace implementation of staff training to improve awareness of and the ability to identify compassion fatigue. Leadership taking an active role in teaching employees how to respond to trauma and burn out in healthy ways leads to a better work environment overall. Leadership should also be available for direct communication from employees who believe they are feeling the effects of compassion fatigue. Those feeling the effects of compassion fatigue can also take steps to alleviate the effects. Having a dedicated support network to talk with, whether that be a therapist, friends, coworkers, or support groups allows the sufferer to let out their negative feelings and get feedback on how to work through it.

The most important steps are the ones that those experiencing compassion fatigue take for themselves. Taking time to focus on themselves and what makes them happy and practicing mindfulness when symptoms start to manifest. While it may not be a be-all end-all solution to the problem, it can help the sufferer to feel better overall.

Compassion fatigue can affect anyone who is involved in the care of others, human or animal. Being aware of the signs and learning how to prevent and mitigate its effects is vital for the health and wellbeing of both the caregiver and the ones being cared for. Most importantly, having proactive strategies in place to deal with compassion fatigue will make navigating it a much less daunting endeavor.

ORC Calendar



Submission Deadline for IACUC



RCOI Meeting



IRB Meeting



IRB Protocol Deadline



IACUC Meeting