



SAMAREC POPIA COMPLIANCE SOP, FEBRUARY 2024, V1

Research ethics
committee

1. INTRODUCTION

The Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act is a South African law that regulates the processing of personal information which commenced as law on 1 July 2020. While it primarily focuses on the protection of individuals' privacy, it has implications for Research Ethics Committees (RECs) that handle personal information as part of their oversight of research projects.

2. PURPOSE OF THE SOP

Standard Operating Procedure (herein referred to as SOP) serves several important purposes which include the protection of personal information obtained by South African Medical Association Research Ethics Committee (SAMAREC).

These procedures are crucial for ensuring ethical conduct, maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of research participants, and ensuring compliance with relevant laws and regulations.

3. SCOPE

- 3.1 The scope of this SOP covers establishing the procedure to follow for accessing and processing of any personal information belonging to another. The document also covers the responsibilities and procedures to ensure confidentiality within the Committee and the SAMA offices.
- 3.2 All SAMAREC members, researchers, research ethics administrators and SAMA personnel appreciate and understand the importance of the confidentiality surrounding the documentation managed by SAMAREC.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF SAMAREC

- Ethical Conduct
- Participant Privacy and Confidentiality
- Compliance with Regulations
- Informed Consent
- Data Security Measures
- Data Retention and Disposal
- Risk Management
- Document Control

5. PROCEDURES AND ROLE OF DATA PROTECTION OFFICERS

The SAMAREC Officer and SAMAREC Legal Advisor(s) shall be appointed as the Data Protection Officers(Herein referred to as “**DP Officers**”)

- 5.1 DP Officers shall be responsible for overseeing the Committee's compliance with the POPI Act. It is an inherent responsibility and presumption through eligibility appointment that DP Officers possess the

appropriate understanding of data protection laws and regulations relevant to RECs.

- 5.2 The SAMA IT Department must establish robust security measures to protect personal information from unauthorized access, disclosure, alteration, or destruction. This includes encryption, access controls, and secure storage practices and data breach response plans. It is the responsibility of DP officers to ensure that these measures are upheld and in place.
- 5.3 Documentation and Record-keeping must be maintained as this documentation will serve as evidence of the Committee's commitment to POPI Act compliance.
- 5.4 SAMAREC shall be provided with regular training and awareness programs that are applicable to committee members, researchers, and other staff involved in data processing.
- 5.5 DP Officers shall further ensure that SAMAREC remains informed about POPI Act requirements and their role in maintaining compliance.
- 5.6 DP Officers shall conduct regular audits and assessments of data processing activities to identify and address any potential compliance gaps and risks. This proactive approach is aimed at maintaining ongoing compliance with the POPI Act and other relevant data protection laws.

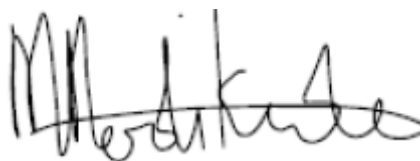
6. SAMAREC COMMITMENT

SAMAREC is dedicated to upholding the principles and requirements set forth by the POPI Act in our role as guardians of ethical research practices. Our commitment extends to safeguarding the privacy, confidentiality, and rights of individuals and others whose personal information is processed in the course of research activities.

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "J Snyman", written over a horizontal line.

Prof J Snyman
SAMAREC Chairperson
Signed: 21 February 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "M Nodikida", written over a horizontal line.

Dr M Nodikida
SAMA CEO
Signed: 10 October 2024