6.0.1 New Study Ideas/Proposals

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<td>Version</td>
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Scheduled review

Date: August 2017

Responsible person: National Project Officer & National Manager
Purpose

The Palliative Care Clinical Studies Collaborative (PaCCSC) is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health. Initial studies were defined by the Palliative Care Medicines Working Group as priority medications for the generation of evidence into their net effect.

Additional new studies have come under the umbrella of PaCCSC where competitive grant funds have been secured to support the conduct of the studies.

PaCCSC has reached a stage of maturity where ideas for new clinical medication studies are forthcoming from the palliative care clinical research community, and commercial interests, and the Collaborative needs a mechanism to provide direction in relation to:

- the assessment of new study ideas/proposals brought to PaCCSC; and
- the support structures available to researchers that (following acceptance of the new study idea/proposal) can be provided using the established clinical research infrastructure that makes up PaCCSC. (See PaCCSC Support)

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) describes the process all new study concepts/ideas will go through in order to proceed towards pilot or full study recruitment.

Other related SOP’s

All PaCCSC supported studies are required to operate in accordance with the PaCCSC suite of SOP’s and other work instructions and policy documents as developed by PaCCSC.

Attachments

New Study Proposal Template
New Study Proposal Evaluation Template

References

Nil
Definitions

Coordinating Centre
The Coordinating Centre for PaCCSC is Flinders University Department of Palliative and Supportive Services. The National Manager and Project Officer at this site work closely with the Lead Investigator, all Principal Investigators, the local site staff, the Study Statistician, and the Central Randomisation Service to manage the operational study procedures.

Human Research Ethics Committees (HREC)
An independent body (a review board or committee, institutional, regional, national or supranational), duly constituted of medical professionals and non-medical members, whose responsibility it is to ensure the protection of the rights, safety and well-being of participants involved in a trial and to provide public assurance of that protection by, among other things, reviewing and approving/providing acceptance opinion on the study protocol, the suitability of the investigator(s), facilities, and the methods and material to be used in obtaining and documenting informed consent of the participants.

Lead Investigator
The investigator who leads the study protocol development. The Lead Investigator in a multi-centre study also takes responsibility for the coordination of investigators at different sites.

Pilot Study (also known as a Feasibility Study)
A small scale, preliminary study conducted to test the feasibility of a large scale study. Elements tested in a pilot study include (but are not limited to):

- Practical application of the protocol
- Ability to recruit
- Effect size (statistical variability)
- Prediction of appropriate sample size for a larger study

Phase III (3) Study
Clinical trials are conducted in a series of steps (phases). Each phase is designed to answer a separate research question. Phase III (3) clinical trials is when the intervention (investigational product) is given to a large groups of people to confirm its effectiveness, monitor side effects, compare it to commonly used treatments, and collect information that will enable the intervention to be used safely.

Principal Investigator
The person responsible for the conduct of a clinical study at a study site. If a study is conducted by a team of individuals at a study site, the Principal Investigator is the responsible leader of the team. The Principal Investigator is qualified by education, training and experience to assume responsibility for the proper conduct of the study, is thoroughly familiar with the use of the investigational product and is aware of (and complies with) the applicable regulatory requirements. The qualifications of the Principal Investigator are appropriate to their role in the study.

Scientific Committee
The Scientific Committee is a group of individuals experienced in multi-site research, policy development or evidence based practice, with at least three members with expertise in the conduct of clinical studies, preferably within palliative care or multi-site in nature.

The role of the Scientific Committee is to:

- Advise the Executive Group, Management Advisory Board, Trial Management Committee, Lead Investigator and study sites on scientific matters that may arise
• Assist the Management Advisory Board with the recommendations on the development of new study proposals
• Review KPIs before prior to recruitment commencement
• Indicate as required, an internal audit of any site or study and if necessary, act upon the findings of audit.

**Standard Operating Procedure**
Detailed, written instructions to achieve uniformity of the performance of a specific function.

**Study Site**
The local site for participant enrolment and study conduct. Each site has a Principal Investigator, local site study staff, and an associated site pharmacy.

**Sub-investigator**
Any individual member of the clinical study team designated and supervised by the Principal Investigator at a study site to perform critical study-related procedures and/or to make specific study-related decisions.

**Trial Management Committee**
The Trial Management Committee has overall responsibility for the development, review and oversight issues specific to each of the studies including applications for external funding for individual studies, recruitment, outcomes and study milestones. Each study has a Trial Management Committee and members include the Lead Investigator, Principal Investigators (from each site) and site coordinators (if available).
Procedure
All new study applications are made to the PaCCSC National Manager, using the New Study Proposal Template (see Attachment 1). PaCCSC undertakes to formally review applications for new studies twice per annum.

In line with the purpose and aims of PaCCSC, new study support will be considered for:

- Randomised controlled trials (RCTs)
- Small pilot studies for proof of concept (feasibility, safety, efficacy)
- Sub-studies embedded within a current study, that adds value to the suite of currently running RCTs

New studies that do not fit within the criteria listed are unable to be considered for support.

Applications for new clinical research study ideas/proposals undertake the following staged process in order to be taken into pilot and/or subsequent phase III clinical study development under the governance and management of PaCCSC:

1. **Proposal**

- Informal discussions of new ideas / proposals can be tabled at any Trial Management Committee meeting to inform the development of a concept or to formulate a trial development group which can progress a concept in preparation for formal presentation.
- The study concept is formally presented (15 minute presentation) at the Annual Research Forum (in March) or the June Trial Management Committee meeting
- Presentations are given by the Lead Investigator for the new idea / proposal
- The new study idea is evaluated by the Trial Management Committee members using the New Study Evaluation template (Attachment 2)
- All new study ideas must achieve an average score of ~70 or above to progress to stage 2 of the selection process.
- The Lead Investigator is informed of the outcome of the evaluation by the Trial Management Committee by the PaCCSC National Manager

2. **Development**

- The Lead Investigator for the proposed study develops a draft protocol for the study on the appropriate PaCCSC Protocol Template (pilot or full Phase III study template).
- PaCCSC assists the drafting of the protocol by providing teleconference facilities and practical implementation advice as required.
- If the protocol is not developed and ready for presentation to the Scientific Committee within one year of the initial presentation to the Trial Management Committee, the idea goes back to stage 1 for re-presentation to the Annual Research Forum.
- The protocol is presented at the next Scientific Committee meeting (held twice annually), or if required can be reviewed out of session at the discretion of the Chair.
- Prior to presentation of the draft protocol to the Scientific Committee a spokesperson, who is a member of the Scientific Committee is nominated to provide carriage of the study at the meetings of the Committee and if needed provide feedback to the study investigators. The member will continue as the spokesperson throughout the life of the study and/or their term on the Committee.
- The Scientific Committee assesses the protocol and determines if the study design is scientifically rigorous to be supported by PaCCSC.

3. **Sub-Committee**
• A sub-committee of contributing experts is formed for protocols approved by the Scientific Committee. The sub-committee includes (but is not limited to):
  o The Lead Investigator
  o Biostatistician
  o Health economist
  o PaCCSC National Manager or National Project Officer
  o Other individuals with the requisite skills to benefit the protocol development process (people who have attended the ACORD concept development workshop are considered favourably).
• A full pilot study protocol is completed and submitted for approval to relevant Human Research Ethics Committees (HRECs).
• PaCCSC assists the development of the full protocol by providing teleconference facilities and practical implementation advice as required.

Note: New study ideas/proposals that fail at any stage of the above process are able to be re-submitted again in the future for one further attempt at gaining the support needed to take the idea/proposal forward.

4. Ongoing support from PaCCSC
• All new studies supported by PaCCSC are conducted under the direction of the PaCCSC governance framework
• All new studies supported by PaCCSC are undertaken within the PaCCSC Standard Operating Procedures and other policy documents for the duration of the study
• All new studies supported by PaCCSC are operationally supported by the Coordinating Centre.

a. Piloting
• All new PaCCSC studies undergo a pilot study and report on the outcomes from the pilot prior to moving forward into an adequately powered phase III clinical trial.
• Pilot studies that have been conducted under the auspice of another institution/organisation are eligible for the same presentation to the Scientific Committee for evaluation and support prior to the commencement of the phase III trial.
• At the successful completion of the pilot study a phase III clinical trial protocol is written by the Lead Investigator and study sub-committee
• The Phase III clinical trial protocol (and pilot study report) is submitted to the Scientific Committee for evaluation prior to the commencement of the trial.

b. Funding
• PaCCSC supports the pilot process for up to two new studies ideas/proposals per annum
• All new studies should be of sufficient scientific merit to be submitted for competitive research funding to the NHMRC or other funding agencies.
• PaCCSC acknowledges the competitiveness of this process and encourages Lead Investigators to re-submit research proposals supported by PaCCSC which have been unsuccessful in previous competitive funding rounds.
• All PaCCSC supported new studies being submitted to a competitive grant process are critically reviewed by a study review sub-committee prior to the application being submitted. The Lead Investigator is responsible for allowing time for the review prior to submission.
• Successful applications for funding are disclosed to PaCCSC as the study sponsor. A budget is developed in line with the requirements of the study for the expenditure of the funds to maximise the opportunity for success of the study.
• If a new study fails to attract competitive grant funding and the Scientific Committee rules that the study is of sufficient merit to approach Government for support, a proposal is made to request individual study funding directly from Government. This is a last resort only and study investigators should not rely on this as a first line approach to funding.
c. PaCCSC Support Role (Collaborative Research Group / Sponsor)

PaCCSC is the Collaborative Research Group (CRG) / sponsor for all new studies (whether pilot or phase III) receiving approval from the PaCCSC Scientific Committee.

- PaCCSC acts as sponsor of the study for the purposes of the Therapeutic Goods Administration’s (TGA) Clinical Trial Notification (CTN) Scheme or CTX Scheme (or any successor scheme) and is responsible for preparing and submitting all documents required by the TGA to file an application for initiating and conducting the study.

- The provision to each Principal Investigator, and (through the Principal Investigator) all institutions participating in the clinical study and the reviewing HREC, of all current and relevant information regarding the investigational product/study medication as reasonably required to justify the nature, scope and duration of the study.

- PaCCSC implements and maintains quality assurance and quality control systems with written SOPs to ensure that the study can be conducted and data generated, documented, recorded and reported.

- PaCCSC designates appropriately qualified personnel to advise on study-related medical questions or problems.

- PaCCSC Monitors the study and the application of the investigational product/study medication in PaCCSC sites throughout Australia and advises, via the Principal Investigator, all participating sites and TGA of the cessation elsewhere of any relevant trial, or the withdrawal of the investigational product/study medication from any other market for safety reasons.

- PaCCSC notifies all participating sites of any adverse events (including serious adverse events) that occur during the course of the study (either at the study site or other study sites, including overseas sites) which may require alteration of the conduct of the study, or which may affect the rights, interests, safety or well-being of study participants.

- PaCCSC facilitates cooperation between participating institutions and/or the reviewing HREC in investigating any adverse event (including serious adverse event) arising out of or in connection with the study.

- PaCCSC maintains insurance, or ensures that there is a named insurer for each participating site, with respect to its activities and indemnity obligations under any agreement.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Investigator/s</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Study title</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Collaborating partners</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- PaCCSC only</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Other trial groups, specify __________________________</td>
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<td>- Pharmaceutical companies, specify __________________________</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Background and rationale (including key papers):</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Study objectives:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Aim</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Null hypothesis</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Primary outcome measure</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Secondary outcome measure/s</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Study population:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Exclusion criteria</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Any recruitment issues of note:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Investigational plan:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Overall study design</strong></td>
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<td>Treatment arms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intervention/s</td>
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<td>Sample size estimate</td>
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<td>Statistical analysis plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health economic analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethics, including any perceived/real issues with ethics approval</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other trials or initiatives with which this proposed study links</td>
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<td>Equipment or other resources required to conduct the study</td>
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New study evaluation
Members of the PaCCSC Trials Management Committee are requested to evaluate all new study proposals presented at the Annual Research Forum or June meeting of the TMC to determine the feasibility of taking the two highest ranked RCTs or pilots in order to underpin an RCT forward with the support of the PaCCSC sites and central coordinating office.

PaCCSC support
PaCCSC will act as CRG/sponsor for all new studies (whether pilot or phase III) receiving approval from the PaCCSC Scientific Committee as provided in the SOP

New study ideas/proposals criteria
Studies that complement the portfolio of trials already run by PaCCSC will be given precedence. No study that directly competes with a current PaCCSC open study will be supported until such time as the recruitment targets for the current open study are reached. In line with the purpose and aims of PaCCSC, new study support will be provided to studies that:

- are randomised controlled trials; or
- small pilot studies for proof of concept (feasibility, safety, efficacy).
- Additionally, studies that value add to the suite of currently running RCT’s ie. Sub-studies that are genuinely embedded within a current study may be considered.

Any new studies that do not fit within these criteria are unable to be supported.

Evaluation conduct and announcement of results
All TMC members are requested to complete the evaluation (next page) following the new study presentation at the Annual Research Forum or June meeting of the TMC.

New study presenters will be notified by the PaCCSC national manager of the outcome of the evaluation process.
### PaCCSC - New Study Idea/Proposal TMC Evaluation

*Trials Management Committee (TMC) members are asked to complete the below evaluation and return to the PaCCSC central coordinating office before the end of the Forum or within one week of the June TMC meeting date.*

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<tr>
<th>Evaluation items</th>
<th>Score out of</th>
<th>Scored as</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the study in an area where current evidence is limited or low level?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Will the study build on other work being undertaken by PaCCSC?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the study design sufficient to achieve the primary and secondary aims?</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the study likely to receive ethics approval?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Is recruitment of participants to the study likely to be relatively easy?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Will the outcomes have a health economic benefit?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Would you support the undertaking of this study at your site?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the study design include input from health disciplines other than palliative care?</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have all efforts to reduce burden on either patients or staff been considered?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there funding from other sources available?</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
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<tr>
<td>If a pilot study, will the evidence gained be scientifically robust to enable a submission for competitive funding</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
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**Other comments:**

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___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

**Signed:**

**Name:**