Role Plays: Informed Consent In Action

Role plays should be done in small groups of 2 or 3 depending on the size of the class. Students should spend about 20 minutes doing role plays. Then the entire group should come together to discuss.

This activity can be done using one of the model consent forms or ideally, the consent form for the study on which participants will actually be working. Role players will need to study the consent form and the notes below prior to the role plays.

Individuals in each small group should take turns being the person obtaining informed consent and the participant. The observer role is optional and can be replaced by discussion. (Observer/discussion notes can also be the basis of the larger group discussion).

**Role Play 1: Understanding**

*George:* Responsible for obtaining informed consent.

*Rita:* 60-year old woman. Has diabetes and meets other inclusion criteria. Has limited reading skills and poor eyesight. Makes excuses about why she does not want to read the form. Makes incorrect statements about the research. Asks questions that show that she does not understand what is involved in research participation.

*Observer/Discussion:* Note different strategies that George can use to help Rita understand the study without making her feel uncomfortable.

**Role Play 2: Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria**

*Martha:* Responsible for obtaining informed consent.

*Joseph:* Does not have diabetes and therefore does not meet inclusion/exclusion criteria. Still wants to participate because the research study provides $10. Lies about having diabetes in order to try to qualify. Tries to persuade Martha that she should let you sign up because you really need the money.

*Observer:* Note questions that Martha can ask to ensure that Joseph meets the study’s inclusion/exclusion criteria. Note ways that Martha can explain to Joseph why he cannot participate. Note strategies that Martha can use to tell Joseph no without being rude.
Role Play 3: Coercion

Fred: Responsible for enrolling participants and obtaining informed consent. Has not successfully recruited anyone today. Begs, pleads, bribes, and uses guilt – i.e., tries everything! to get Rick to sign the consent form. Tells Rick that the research is really going to help him and going to do a lot of good for the community. Tells Rick that he will lose his job if he doesn’t sign up enough people. Tells Rick that if he is concerned about privacy, he doesn’t have to use his real name or answer questions honestly.

Rick: Does not want to participate because he does not have time and is also concerned about his privacy and the confidentiality of the information he will share.

Observer: Note what is wrong with the ways that Fred tries to persuade Rick to sign the consent form. Note the various things that Rick does and says to demonstrate that he is not interested. Note what might be some more appropriate ways of dealing with Rick’s concerns about privacy.

Role Play 4: Participant Questions

Kim: Responsible for obtaining informed consent.

Janet: Is interested in the study, but also has a lot of concerns, questions, and ideas about research.

She wants to know:
- Why is this research being conducted in my neighborhood?
- Who is this research going to help? What changes can she expect in her community?
- Is she going to be used as a guinea pig? Are scientists going to experiment on her?
- How is her information going to be kept private? Her cousin signed up for a research study, and his identity was stolen 2 weeks later.
- Where is the money for this research coming from? Why isn’t that money being used to provide community services?

Observer: Note the answers Kim provides in response Janet’s questions. Are they accurate and persuasive? What are some other potential responses?