

Policies and Procedures: Access to MSOD Data for a Sub-Study

A sub-study involves the collection of new data from MSOD participants. The new data are generally linked to existing MSOD data to maximise longitudinal analysis. In its consideration to approve sub-studies, the MSOD Research and Scientific Advisory Committee will assess the extra demands placed on participants and the potential for over-burdening against the value of the research. Other considerations include privacy and confidentiality of participants, feasibility, scientific value, consistency with the overall aims of MSOD and logistical requirements.

Please note a fee may be incurred on a cost-recovery basis if significant additional MSOD resources are required to complete the request for data. Contact the MSOD Secretariat for details.

Process

The general process for conducting a sub-study using MSOD data is as follows:

1. Researchers must read this document and complete an Expression of Interest form.
2. The MSOD Research and Scientific Advisory Committee will assess the application.
3. Once the application is successful, a contract is signed.
4. Ethics approval must then be sought from relevant institutions as appropriate.
5. Progress reports are provided to the MSOD Research and Advisory Committee at pre-defined intervals.
6. The MSOD Research and Scientific Advisory Committee is informed of any changes to the study as they occur.
7. Any resultant papers, reports, publications etc., along with the appropriate acknowledgements, are provided to the MSOD Research and Scientific Advisory Committee for approval prior to submission.

Participants

Sub-studies can be managed in one of two ways:

1. By MSOD – where the MSOD Data Manager selects participants, ensures potential participants have agreed to being approached for the sub-study, and obtains consent. Personal identifiers are kept at the MSOD office. MSOD distributes and collects all surveys before removing personal identifiers and passing them onto the researchers.
2. By the researcher and MSOD – where MSOD ensures potential participants have agreed to being approached for the sub-study and the researcher selects participants and obtains consent. The researcher distributes and collects all surveys.

Where information about participants (such as contact details, withdrawal from MSOD, or preference not to be involved in sub-studies) is found to be different from that provided by MSOD, details must be passed on to the MSOD office for its records.

Data

Data are provided either in spreadsheet form or as tab delimited text files. Data files include all survey items and derived variables approved for release on a project-by-project basis. The MSOD Data Dictionary provides a detailed description of survey questions, their source, how they are used and information regarding the derived and calculated variables. Data should be used according to standards established and defined in the Data Dictionary, unless a variation is approved. All data provided will be cleaned, and protocols for the cleaning process will be made available to researchers. It is the responsibility of the analyst to become familiar with and carefully examine the data prior to analysis.

The first variable in each file is the Study ID, which is a unique participant identifier. Data are compiled in such a way as to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, thus some survey items (such as birth date, country of birth, language spoken at home) may be removed or aggregated. Such data will only be available if relevant to the specific research proposal and with appropriate ethics approval.

Requested data will be released after the MSOD Research and Scientific Advisory Committee approves the study and once all Human Research Ethics requirements are fulfilled. Data may not be used for any purposes other than those approved by the MSOD Research and Scientific Advisory Committee and cannot be passed on to third parties. Data must be securely stored where it is accessible only to the researcher/s.

Once analysis is complete, data files must be removed from the computer on which they were stored and archived on a CD in accordance with scientific research guidelines. This will be confirmed in writing upon completion of the research and stored at the MSOD office.

Questionnaires and Variables

MSOD questionnaires (Commencing Student Questionnaire, Exit Questionnaire and PGY1/Intern Questionnaire), a full list of MSOD variables, and a collection schedule for future questionnaires are available on the MSOD website: <http://www.medicaldeans.org.au/medical-schools-outcomes-database>. Some questionnaires have undergone minor modifications between collections, thus it is imperative the researcher correctly identifies the corresponding questionnaire for the data requested.

Acknowledgement and Publication

All publications, revisions and resubmissions (including accompanying paperwork such as author approval forms) must be approved by the MSOD Research and Scientific Advisory Committee prior to submission. A hard or soft copy of the published paper must be provided to MSOD for its records.

The following statement acknowledging MSOD must be included in all publications and approved by the MSOD Research and Scientific Advisory Committee with the proposed publication:

The research on which this paper/book/monograph/report/presentation was based on data provided by the Medical Schools Outcomes Database (MSOD) Project, Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand. We are grateful to the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing for funding the project and to the medical students/graduates/doctors who participated.

Privacy, Confidentiality and Anonymity

All research and studies associated with the MSOD Project must comply with the Information Privacy Principles, Section 14 of the Privacy Act 1988 (and future amendments) and the National Privacy Principles (contained in the 2000 Amendment to the Act). Copies of these documents can be found on the Privacy Commission website (www.privacy.gov.au) or provided by MSOD upon request.

Anonymity and confidentiality of subjects must be preserved in all analyses and publications. This applies to individual participants and subgroups. Identification of individual medical schools can only be made after permission has been given by Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand, as well as the Deans of the affected medical schools.

Human Research Ethics

Sub-studies require ethics approval from the researcher's host institution Human Research Ethics Committee as well as the Human Research Ethics Committee of other institutions from which participants are sourced. It is the researcher's responsibility to ensure all ethics requirements are fulfilled.

Ownership and Intellectual Property

MSOD data is owned by Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand (Inc.). Appropriate acknowledgement must be made in any research which utilises MSOD data. Research carried out using MSOD data is the intellectual property of the researchers who conduct the study.