Letter to the Editors

Reply to Frank Wells' letter

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In my editors' view piece [1], I expressed a reservation regarding Morris Brown's position on research ethics committees (RECs) [2], but argued that robust review 'need not be time wasting or nit-picking – but it must be streamlined and coordinated to avoid the harms Brown identifies'. Much of the useful work of RECs involves weighing conflicting priorities (e.g. the responsibilities of the doctor to 'do no harm', the rights of potential healthy subjects to take part in a Phase I study from which they could benefit financially but not medically, the value to society of a potential new medicine). RECs should bear in mind that delaying good research harms patients, and should take this into account during their deliberations. This simple point should not be lost in the smoke of the above exchange.

REFERENCES

- 1 Ritter JM. Research governance: the Dutch defence. *Br J Clin Pharmacol* 2009; 67: 485–6.

- 2 Brown MJ. The impact of clinical trials legislation on clinical pharmacology: problems and solutions. *Br J Clin Pharmacol* 2009; 67: 487–93.

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