



# Collaborative Research

Jeanine Beasley, EdD, OTR, CHT, FAOTA,  
Occupational Therapy Department GVSU

Blake Ashby, PhD, PE,  
School of Engineering, GVSU

# Reasons for Collaboration

- Some funding agencies favor interdisciplinary research teams
- Share resources
- Can have a grander scope with more subjects
- More credibility and validity to the project if investigators with specific experience are involved
- Division of labor
- Learn from other disciplines

# Types of Collaborative Research

- Within academic institutions:
  - Faculty and staff
  - Within/between departments
  - Faculty and students
  - Among students
- Between academic institutions
- Academic institutions and a government agency/department
- Academic institutions and industry
- Domestic and International



# Collaborative Research

- One person is typically the Principal Investigator (PI)- in charge.
- When a PI is in charge of all of the work done on a project, the lines of responsibility are CLEAR.
- The PI is ultimately responsible and accountable for all aspects of the project.



# It helps to keep things CLEAR

- C - Communication
- L - Leadership to manage the project
- E - Enthusiasm
- A - Agreements
- R - Roles and Relationships



# C-Communication

- Researchers in different fields bring different culture, practices, and expectations to a project
  - Data management
  - Ownership of the project
  - Different standards for listing authors
  - Different publication styles
  - Research styles
- Follow two common sense rules
  - Do not ignore any responsibilities
  - When there are choices about appropriate action, select the most demanding option- conflict of interest thresholds



# Conflict of Interest Thresholds

- Reporting outside financial interests
- Some research institutions and the government allow researchers to earn up to \$10,000
- Other institutions have lower thresholds requiring researchers to report conflict of interest with any outside financial interest
- When collaborating use the lowest financial threshold

# C-Communication

- Attention to what others are doing
- Report and discuss problems as well as findings
- Make other collaborators aware of any important changes, such as changes in key personnel
- Share related news and developments so that everyone in the collaboration is equally knowledgeable about important information
- Communication styles between disciplines





# L- Leadership

- Management plans may be needed that cover:
  - financial issues
  - resources
  - training and supervision
  - formal agreements
  - compliance
  - scope of the research



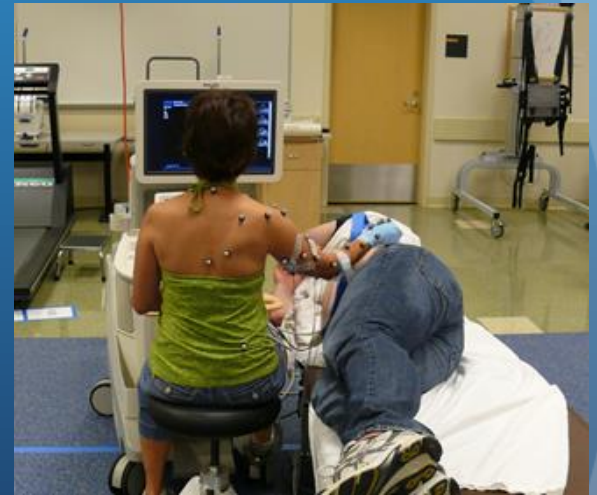
# E- Enthusiasm for the project

- Buy in from those involved
- Keeping the group motivated
- Keeping the group on task



# A- Agreements- Memorandum of Understanding

- Who owns the materials
- How the materials can be used
- Proper acknowledgment of the source
- Accountability
- Timing and duration of the project
- Due dates
- Dissemination



# R- Roles and Responsibilities

- Goals of the project and anticipated outcomes
- The role each partner in the collaboration will play
- How data will be collected, stored, and shared
- How changes in the research design will be made
- Who will be responsible for drafting publication



# R- Roles and Responsibilities- continued

- The criteria that will be used to identify and rank contributing authors
- Who will be responsible for submitting reports and meeting other requirements
- Who will be responsible for or have the authority to speak publicly for the collaboration
- How intellectual property rights and ownership issues will be resolved
- How the collaboration can be changed and when it will come to an end

# Collaborative Research: Conclude or Continue

- The end of the research may or may not mean the end of a collaborative relationship
- The decision to conclude or continue may be made when:
  - Funding ends
  - Work is completed
  - Change in priorities
  - New directions in research develop



# Conclusion

- Benefits and pitfalls to collaborative research
- Keep things CLEAR:
  - C - Communication
  - L - Leadership to manage the project
  - E - Enthusiasm
  - A - Agreements
  - R - Roles and Relationships

# References

- Steneck, NH (2007) ORI- Introduction to the responsible conduct of research. Department of Health and Human Services, USA.
- Mancina, FL (2005) Scientific Integrity. ASM Press, Washington, D.C.
- Responsible Conduct of Research Website at Northern Illinois University  
([http://ori.hhs.gov/education/products/niu\\_collabresearch/flash/collabresearch/collabresearch.html](http://ori.hhs.gov/education/products/niu_collabresearch/flash/collabresearch/collabresearch.html))