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CONTACT:

David Haney, Director of Strategic Communications
University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria
309.671.8404 | dhaney@uicomp.uic.edu

New accreditation status raises level of patient safety; aids research efforts

PEORIA, Ill. [May 17, 2016] – Adding to the already strong clinical research environment across central Illinois is a new accreditation status at the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria.

The Peoria Institutional Review Board, located at the College of Medicine, earned accreditation by the Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs, the College’s department heads heard on Monday.

The Peoria IRB is responsible for assuring the rights and welfare of human subjects participating in research studies is protected. To earn the higher accreditation, organizations must demonstrate they have extensive safeguards in place and adhere to high standards for research.

Only six IRBs in Illinois hold the same high level of accreditation. Peoria is the second in downstate Illinois – and fewer than 200 IRBs nationwide hold the AAHRPP distinction.

“This accreditation will benefit our partners in health care throughout central Illinois,” said Dr. Sara Rusch, Regional Dean at College of Medicine in Peoria who also oversees the Peoria IRB. “We always have provided a high level of oversight for patients, but what this says is that we’ve raised that bar even higher by adding additional layers of protection and routine monitoring. Peoria will be more attractive and more competitive a place to conduct research as a result.”

Whether approving a health survey, a review of data from medical charts, introducing an experimental drug or new medical device requires approval of an IRB.

The Peoria IRB was established in 1995, using a collaborative community centered approach. Currently, the Peoria IRB has more than 500 active research projects in its purview, mostly in Peoria but also extending to Bloomington and Galesburg. Many of the research activities involve testing treatments for cancer, blood disorders, neurological disorders, lung disease, and medical education research. The Peoria IRB consists of a 20-member board of physicians, pharmacists, psychologists, ethicists, nurses, statisticians, basic science researchers, and others.

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