

Gary Pettett, M.D.



When it comes to research involving human subjects, Gary Pettett, MD, believes we need more “principled investigators” than “principal investigators.”

Dr. Pettett draws that conclusion from more than twenty years of experience in research bioethics. He currently chairs the Pediatric Institutional Review Board at Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City, Missouri, and is a member of its Research Council.

Dr. Pettett first became associated with the Center in the late 1990's when the Center began forming a consortium of institutional review boards. Dr. Pettett and Don Reynolds, a program associate at the Center, formed the Kansas City IRB Consortium to share best practices, produce common educational programs for all IRB members, and discuss IRB issues and concerns in a confidential manner.

“The concept of the Center for Practical Bioethics is unique,” says Dr. Pettett. “With all the challenges in clinical research these days, it is imperative for professionals to find a neutral ground to discuss these issues. The Center plays that role.”

As a Fellow at the Center, Dr. Pettett says he will continue pursuing areas of interest, including the ethical dimensions of human subject research and professionalism in medicine. “The two areas are closely linked,” Dr. Pettett says. “When the public loses confidence in the moral character of medicine and research, government responds with regulatory mandates. And that inserts new challenges into the physician/patient relationship and makes it more difficult to bring new products into the medical market.”

Dr. Pettett believes the public views medicine skeptically these days because physicians have lost their professional anchor. “We need to speak in the patient's best interest and less about our own welfare,” he says. “We need to become an advocate for our patients.”