Welcome to our Life Sciences newsletter!
A quick monthly read with useful information, articles, and views from our team of experienced DPOs on the latest data protection news specific to the Life Sciences.

LIFE SCIENCES IN THE NEWS

Happy Clinical Trials Day!

Clinical trials rely on participants sharing highly sensitive data. For sponsors, strong privacy compliance is essential to protecting trust, reducing risk, and keeping studies moving.

For Clinical Trials Day, our Life Sciences specialists share the privacy risks sponsors should be preparing for in 2026 and how organisations can address them.

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INFORMATION, BLOGS & ARTICLES

This month, we look at the European Data Protection Board's (EDPB) draft guidance on scientific research. Our infographic highlights the key factors organisations should consider when assessing whether a project qualifies under the GDPR:

Does your project qualify as scientific research under the GDPR?

Assess these six factors alongside the nature, scope, context and purpose of processing.

If most factors are met, the activity is likely scientific research. If not, you must justify why it still qualifies.

European Data Protection Board: Draft Guidelines 1/2026

A DPO'S PERSPECTIVE

The EDPB's draft guidance also revisits one of the Life Sciences sector's longest-running debates: which lawful basis is most appropriate for clinical trials?

Lawrence Carter, Life Sciences Sector Lead and DPO at The DPO Centre, shares his views on the EDPB's latest position and the potential implications for trial sponsors operating across Europe.

*'In its 2019 **Opinion (3/2019)**, the EPDB suggested that the lawful basis for most private sector clinical trial sponsors would likely be Legitimate Interest, rather than Consent, due to the power imbalance between sponsors and participants. However, the EDPB and EDPS' **Joint Opinion (3/2026)** on the proposed European Biotech Act welcomed plans to standardise the lawful basis for clinical trials as Legal Obligation under the Clinical Trials Regulation (CTR).*

'In this draft scientific research guidance, the EDPB fails to reference its support for Legal Obligation as the standardised clinical trial basis and simultaneously backtracks on their position on Consent, suggesting that broad consent for scientific research may be appropriate for trials where the participant is not severely unwell.

'At a time when Europe is striving for greater harmonisation to attract more innovative research, further contradictory guidance is particularly unwelcome. Sponsors will need to work closely with their DPOs to monitor proposed laws, draft guidance, and individual Member State expectations in order to select the most appropriate lawful basis based on the information available at the time of each trial's submission.'

For any data protection queries you may have, or for further information about how The DPO Centre can support your organisation, please contact us.

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