Case Example

The data collected for a human subjects project is being maintained in a personal computer at a computer laboratory facility. The computer is networked and has login and password protection. When storing data for a highly confidential human subjects project, the research staff person in charge of data collection realizes that the computer is maintained by a Local Area Network (LAN) administrator who is not involved in the human subjects project. The LAN administrator has been in charge of all the computers in the facility for a long time, and has access to all the data maintained in the computers in the facility. However, the PI is still concerned about the confidentiality of the data.

Case Example Questions

* Should the LAN administrator be prevented from accessing the human subject data on the computer?
* If computer problems arise who would be responsible for these problems?
* If problems arise and files are not backed up who would be responsible for recovering these files?

Case Example

At the completion of a healthcare study about infants, the research team decides to archive certain parts of the data and discard the remaining part of the data that may not be necessary for replicating the study in the future or conducting further analyses. One of the project team members is assigned the task of discarding data by shredding, deleting computer files, and reformatting the disks. While exploring the data to be discarded, the team member realizes that the data decided for discarding contains information about particular infants that could be useful to the parents if a cure or treatment was ever discovered for their ailment covered in the study. But the project team is responsible only for the particular healthcare study on infants as directed by the funding agency.

Case Example Questions

* Should the data continue to be discarded?
* Would a conversation with peers regarding the usefulness of the data be an acceptable option?
* If comments from peers is split, with half recommending that the data be discarded and the other half recommending that the data be retained what options could be considered next?