

Creating a Positive QA Team Image and Strengthening the Auditor/Research Team Relationship

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1. Background

The Quality Assurance and Safety Monitoring (QASM) team is responsible for auditing investigator-initiated studies at Siteman Cancer Center. Study teams are often uneasy or even fearful about an upcoming audit. As auditors, it can be discouraging to hear that the audit process is considered burdensome, awkward, or punitive. QASM is taking steps to strengthen the auditor/research team relationship.

2. Goals

In the past several years, our QA team has grown from a team of one to a team of four. As our team grew, we set forth on a path of bolstering a positive image and shifting how auditors and the audit process are viewed.

3. Solutions and Methods

We rolled out 4 new initiatives:

- Weekly team meetings
 - With a growing team it became evident that a weekly auditor meeting would be beneficial.
- A QASM team communication plan
 - Communication from our team didn't reach all who needed the information. We developed a template that presents new information more clearly.
- An audit working group
 - Team discussions about common audit findings and mining audit data revealed teams who excelled at certain aspects of study management and had great processes. We convened an audit working group composed of auditors, team leaders, and managers to connect groups and improve working processes.
- Specific multi-step audit training
 - We developed individualized and study-specific audit training for teams to prepare them for what to expect from the audit process.

4. Outcomes and Future Directions

Our weekly team meeting has made it possible for our team to thrive and generate new ideas.

As new information becomes available we are now better equipped to communicate to all study team members due to our communication plan. This greatly improves our ability to level the playing field when everyone receives the same information at the same time.

Category: Training & Quality Assurance – Work in Progress

Our audit working group attendees were interested in learning from each other. This opened the lines of communication, giving us a platform for sharing information and collaboration and allowing teams to discuss common roadblocks.

Our multi-step process for audit education helps team members become comfortable with the process by knowing what to expect.

Our team realized that though each of us brings to the table a wealth of information and opinions, we sometimes disagree. We discussed in detail how we would conduct our meetings, where each team member has a voice and a listening ear. Our team meetings and discussion guidelines have strengthened our team due to our ability to discuss ideas freely and to truly work together.

Our next steps are to create an internal intranet where educational communications can be stored and accessed by our teams, to continue our audit working group not only in an effort for us to collaborate more with our teams but to also provide an opportunity for teams to collaborate with each other, and to assess how our new training plan affects audit findings and teams' connection to the process.

Creating an image of us as a partner and focusing on collaboration with teams can only improve processes. Working together can help us all reach our goals.