Educating the Next Generation of Clinical Researchers

Leslie Pettiford, RN, MS, OCN, CCRC; Alison Ivey, RN, MS, OCN, CCRP; Thomas George, MD, FACP

BACKGROUND

Many healthcare providers, including physicians, advanced practice providers, nurses, and pharmacists, have limited exposure to clinical research during their formal education. These providers often do not understand how to effectively integrate the research process into routine care, and how clinical research can provide additional treatment options for patients. Discussions about the availability of clinical trials and participation in clinical research are sometimes avoided by many providers due to lack of knowledge and the perception that cancer clinical trials are not acceptable treatment options for patients (1). This dilemma can adversely impact clinical trial recruitment, potential outcomes for patients, and moving science forward.

1. Michaels, M., D'Agostino, T.A., Blakeney, N. et al. J Canc Educ (2015) 30: 152. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13187-014-0662-6

GOALS

The goal of this program is to provide clinical research experience and education to future healthcare providers so that, once they are active clinicians, they have a better understanding of the research process and how clinical research can impact the healthcare and outcomes of oncology patients.

SOLUTIONS & METHODS

The UF Health Cancer Center Clinical Research Office (CRO) implemented a clinical research internship for recent college graduates who are preparing for future careers in healthcare or continued education in health sciences. During the yearlong salaried commitment, interns will have the opportunity to work as Clinical Research Assistants (CRAs), assisting clinical investigators and study teams with the research process while also gaining clinical and oncology exposure. As a CRA, the interns participate in data capture and entry, laboratory procedures, and regulatory affairs related to clinical research. As part of the program, interns also participate in a quality improvement project and analyze the data. Each intern is provided a six-week orientation developed by CRO leadership and the Education and Training Coordinator. The orientation program consists of all institutional required training in addition to CRO specific modules. These are a combination of both in-person and web-based trainings. Each intern is also assigned a mentor that works closely with them to ensure they have exposure to patients in the clinical setting, interaction with treating providers, and engagement with investigators. Below is a list of the areas covered during the internship:

- Good Clinical Practice and Research Ethics
- Biology and Treatment of Cancer
- Informed Consent
- Study Management and Operations
- Principals of Data Management

OUTCOMES

The program is currently ongoing with the first set of interns working within our adult Solid Tumor and Hematologic Malignancies Divisions of the CRO. A second cohort of interns will be onboarded in May 2019 so as to stagger and overlap intern classes. Informal and formal feedback is being solicited from both the interns as well as the study teams in which they are embedded. William New, an intern in the UFHCC CRO's Hematologic Malignancies Division said, "For someone who wants a permanent future in research, this internship provides a comprehensive experience involving both patient follow-up and data management."

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future directions include opening up internship positions within the CRO's IIT Project Management Office and assessing permanent recruitment for interns that would like to continue their career in oncology clinical research.

CONTACT

Leslie Pettiford, RN, MS, OCN, CCRC
Assistant Director, Study Coordination and Data Management
University of Florida Health Cancer Center
Clinical Research Office
2033 Mowry Road, Rm 395
Gainesville FL 32610
(352) 273-6839 • lpettiford@ufl.edu