Building the NCI Network Program

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1. Background

As an NCI-Designated Comprehensive Cancer Center MSK receives funding via the Cancer Center Support Grant (CCSG). One of the expectations is to collaborate and coordinate NCI research efforts. MSK meets this expectation largely though participation in and enrollment to NCI sponsored group studies. As part of the CCSG renewal process, we examined our NCI sponsored group portfolio and noted there were quality concerns (ie audit findings), siloed physician leadership and limited financial support.

2. Goals

As a first step, we created a central team of NCI experts to ensure the most efficient and effective regulatory management of our NCI sponsored group studies, known as the NCI Network Team. Next, we assembled the NCI Group and Grant Leaders at MSK to ensure oversight of MSKs' participation in NCI studies, known as the NCI Network Committee. Together, these groups make up the NCI Network Program.

3. Solutions and Methods

We centralized the NCI subject matter experts onto a central team and made this institutional resource available to all departments that participate in NCI Group protocols. We transitioned regulatory tasks from the departments to the central team and added in QA/QC measures as these trials are not externally monitored. We've tracked our data entry and regulatory metrics in order to evaluate our intervention.
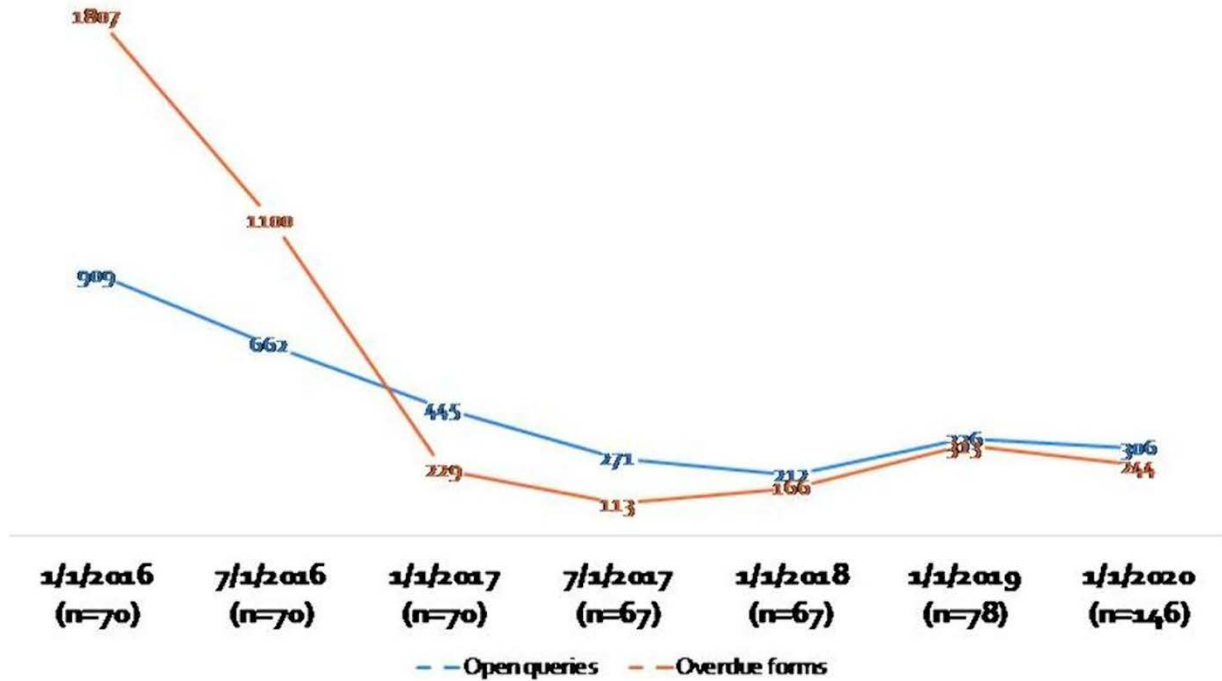
To form the NCI Network Committee, we assembled our grant and NCI group PIs in addition to identifying disease champions. We implemented a monthly meeting of Committee members to review protocols being activated by the various NCI groups and standardize ways to utilize our grants to best support departments participating in this work. The monthly meetings also serve as an opportunity to monitor accruals, grant and data metrics, non-performing studies and to track spending to grants and to our institution.

In an effort to address the limited financial support it was determined at the Institutional level that the centralized team would be supported by grant funding received by MSK and MSK established Institutional Cost Sharing for study expenses, i.e. financial support for the staff working on the individual clinical trials.

4. Outcomes

Our site has made improvements in data reporting timeliness. In addition, we've added a number of new NCI studies to our portfolio and providing financial support to existing trials such that the portfolio is fully funded.

5. Lessons Learned

Together the NCI Network Team and Committee make up MSK's NCI Network Program. The Program is necessary for ensuring the focus, direction and efficient use of institutional resources.

Future plans:

- Develop Redcap database to track protocol activations and grant personnel- this should streamline grant reporting requirements
- Develop Tableau report to eliminate manual tracking of accrual information