

## **Enhancing the DSG Review at the UFHCC**

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### **1. Background**

The University of Florida Health Cancer Center (UFHCC) protocol review and monitoring system (PRMS), comprised of the Disease Site Groups (DSGs) and the Scientific Review and Monitoring Committee (SRMC), is charged with performing rigorous evaluations of feasibility and scientific merit of all cancer-relevant research studies. To enhance quality and review timeliness, UFHCC leadership crafted well-defined roles and responsibilities for DSG leadership. These specifications were needed to provide clear and consistent expectations for first-stage PRMS review. Initial problems identified while fulfilling this responsibility were: inconsistent communication between investigators within DSGs, lengthy DSG review times, variable DSG review documentation for rigor or merit, and communication delays between DSGs and SRMC. These problems arose at SRMC when studies were tabled or approvals delayed due to varied scientific or statistical concerns, which required additional revisions to address SRMC queries.

### **2. Goals**

- Establish clear expectations for DSG reviews
- Improve communication from DSG to SRMC
- Consistently confirm review of scientific merit and support

### **3. Solutions and Methods**

UFHCC leadership identified problems stemming from decentralized and inconsistent application of guidelines by the 13 DSGs. To streamline and overcome inconsistencies during initial review of newly proposed interventional trials, the UFHCC deployed DSG reviewer assessments within Qualtrics, an online survey tool. Each survey includes standard and customizable fields whereby DSG members endorse or decline a trial and answer feasibility questions relevant to the DSG-specific study population. Voting is done completely online, or trial discussion occurs at a scheduled DSG meeting where a survey is sent out after the meeting to record votes and discussion of feasibility and merit. The initial phase of this process was initiated in 2020 within 12 of the 13 DSGs. All votes are recorded and forwarded to the relevant DSG leader(s) for review and final approval.

### **4. Outcomes**

There were no barriers to adoption of Qualtrics, and high engagement was seen. The average response rate across all DSGs in 2020 was 73 percent (range, 54-100 percent). Reviews done through Qualtrics documented improved investigator feedback with key questions of feasibility and merit more thoroughly addressed. In addition, this DSG process appeared to accelerate the SRMC review timeframe. In 2020, time to decision decreased from 39 to 16 days overall for SRMC initial reviews (Figure 1). In addition, a slight increase in the number of trials declined by the DSGs was seen from 2019 (65 percent) to 2020 (68 percent), suggesting Qualtrics helped DSGs become more critical during reviews (Figure 2).

## 5. Lessons Learned

Providing Qualtrics during initial DSG reviews allowed each DSG to be accountable for their portfolio and promoted “buy-in” from DSG voting members, increasing documentation of their scientific review rigor. The ability to record all votes through Qualtrics has allowed for more consistent communication between the DSGs and SRMC. Qualtrics provided DSGs opportunities to provide feedback that may not be shared during a convened meeting where conflicts or time restrictions may arise. Future efforts look to further refine DSG activity to better address protocol feasibility and relevance to UFHCC’s unique catchment area. Additionally, we look to advance the DSG review process within our remaining DSG, the Cancer Control and Population Sciences Group.

Figure:

