

## **Rolling With the Changes: Onboarding Staff Remotely During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

R. Selle, M. Gray, B. Oleson, J.P. Thomas

Medical College of Wisconsin Cancer Center

### **1. Background**

The first case of COVID-19 was discovered in the United States January 21, 2020. Less than two months later, the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW) Cancer Center Clinical Trials Office (CCCTO) transitioned to a mandatory work-from-home status. The cancer center, however, already committed to several new hires prior to this and was forced to find a solution for remote onboarding. Prior to the pandemic, training was almost 100 percent in person, which allowed for dynamic exchanges between the trainer and the trainee. However, with these new remote requirements, we needed to establish an alternative.

### **2. Goals**

We focused on two goals: keeping onboarding both safe and effective. The continually increasing subject accrual during the pandemic made it imperative that new staff members have the training necessary to make an impact soon after their date of hire.

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

The CCCTO employs two staff educators (total FTE of 1.8), who were tasked with modifying the onboarding program to meet the new remote working requirements. All real-time trainings were moved to a WebEx platform, utilizing predeveloped PowerPoint presentations. To increase staff engagement, we asked that webcams be utilized. We used the “teach-back” method during training to create more interaction and dialogue. Handouts were provided in a shared Box.com folder that new staff could easily access, save, and annotate. The new staff members received “homework items” to address independently during their downtime. These included online instruction, materials focused on disease, and educational videos. Educators also incorporated training on resources and workflows specific to the new remote work environment (e.g., utilization of Citrix, etc.).

### **4. Outcomes**

Although the CCCTO educators were able to train new staff remotely, it was not an ideal learning environment. They believe that new staff members did not thrive in their positions until they were able to attend work in person regularly. Many staff members working at home did not have two monitors or a printer to allow efficient notetaking during presentations. This proved to be an added challenge. Since restrictions have eased slightly and vaccinations have steadily increased on campus, the CCCTO educators are using more in-person training again. Large conference rooms are now used for these trainings, allowing staff to spread out to attend in-person instruction safely.

### **5. Lessons Learned**

The CCCTO is fully prepared to onboard staff in a remote setting after utilizing this method for nearly a year. However, since this method was not preferred for onboarding, new staff now start their first several weeks of employment almost exclusively on campus. This allows them to integrate with their

*Category: Training, Quality Assurance, Remote Monitoring, and Auditing – Work in Progress*

respective disease teams and to form relationships with coworkers. The CCCTO has personal protective equipment and workspace protocols in place that allow for a safe-on-campus presence during this critical time.