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

Implementation of a Research-Specific, Electronic Orientation for Clinical Research Professionals

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1. Background

The UF Health Cancer Center (UFHCC) Clinical Research Office (CRO) is the clinical trials arm of the cancer center, responsible for the development, regulatory maintenance, clinical conduct, and oversight of clinical research. Historically, onboarding of new clinical research staff consisted of standard requirements established by the academic institution, while research and position-specific training was provided by CRO division managers and senior staff members. Consequently, the quality and comprehensiveness of initial training was highly variable, contributing to inconsistent performance of essential research tasks, decreased job confidence, and high levels of attrition within the first two years of hire. As a result, a centralized, electronic-based onboarding process was developed and implemented to provide a comprehensive and consistent research-focused orientation.

2. Goals

- Develop a clinical research specific onboarding curriculum for a diverse population of clinical research professionals
- Enhance delivery and accessibility through the use of an electronic learning platform

3. Solutions and Methods

In late 2018 a position dedicated to the centralized management of initial and ongoing training of clinical research staff was created. This hire, with the assistance of leadership, division managers, and content area experts, identified six general categories essential to the conduct of research at the UFHCC. Content-based training was developed and combined with institutional training requirements to create a six-week, comprehensive onboarding program. Onboarding was built into an electronic learning management system (eLMS) to facilitate remote delivery, as well as to enable real-time monitoring by the training and education coordinator. Pre- and post-onboarding assessments were included to assess the efficacy of the content-based curriculum.

4. Outcomes

From January 2020 through March 2021, seven new staff members with diverse professional and educational backgrounds were onboarded using the new eLMS-based curriculum. Currently, four individuals have successfully completed orientation within the required two months of hire and three are still in process and on-track to complete on time. Time to completion of essential training activities has greatly improved with centralized monitoring. Of the four individuals who completed the orientation processes, improved general research knowledge is evidenced by an average 18 percentage point increase from pre-orientation testing to post-orientation testing. Subjectively, individuals oriented in the new system exhibit greater confidence in performing job responsibilities and demonstrate improved awareness of internal policies and resources than their predecessors. Assessments are administered with a pass-fail threshold in order to ensure not only completion of requirements, but retention and

comprehension of information provided. Implementation of these assessments allowed for identification of areas where learning materials and/or delivery could be improved.

5. Lessons Learned

Future goals include modification of the onboarding program for institutional clinical research staff who engage in cancer-relevant research inconsistently as well as delivery of more advanced content in a classroom-based format that allows for real-time discussion and questions, ultimately improving comprehension and applicability of the information gained.

Figure: