**Implementation of Professional Competency Development Program for Clinical Research Professionals**

A. Anderson, A. Kukulka, A. Ivey, T. George

University of Florida Health Cancer Center

**1. Background**

The role of the clinical research professional (CRP) has evolved notably over the last decade in order to meet the needs of an increasingly complex research, compliance, and regulatory environment. The role and responsibilities of the CRP vary significantly both within and across institutions, adding additional layers of difficulty in providing meaningful professional development opportunities. Professional organizations such as the Association of Clinical Research Professionals (ACRP) and the Joint Task Force (JTF) for Clinical Trial Competency have worked to develop universally applicable competency frameworks to assist in aligning competency-based efforts across institutions, however no standardized system exists for the application of these frameworks into ongoing training and development for CRPs. In order to address this need, University of Florida Health Cancer Center implemented a clinical research office (CRO)-wide educational initiative based on the eight competency domains and associated leveled core competencies for CRPs developed by the JTF.

**2. Goals**

* Assess the professional development needs of a diverse and complex clinical research workforce
* Provide ongoing, research-specific training to elevate the performance of our clinical research team

**3. Solutions and Methods**

A multi-tiered research competency development program was implemented to assess learner needs, deliver education through a spiral curriculum model, re-assess to determine progress and identify future educational directions. Prior to educational intervention, staff completed a self-assessment ranking their understanding of the JTF core competencies, and managers were asked to evaluate staff members using the same assessment. Monthly educational lectures (in person and via Zoom) were scheduled during a standard monthly staff meeting and content area experts were recruited to broadly address each of the JTF research specific domains at a fundamental level. These lectures were followed by small group discussions led by division managers to reinforce concepts and facilitate the application of general concepts to role-specific job responsibilities and performance. Once the full series of lecture and small group discussions were complete, the self and manager assessments were repeated to determine the impact of the educational interventions and guide future educational programming.

**4. Outcomes**

Monthly domain lectures and subsequent small group discussions were implemented in totality via Zoom starting July 2020, with the final lecture delivered in March 2021. Research contact hours for ACRP and the Society of Clinical Research Associates (SOCRA) were offered whenever possible to encourage attendance, and in-lecture polling applications incorporated to encourage and improve audience engagement. Overall staff response has been positive with attendance rates > 90 percent, and high levels of engagement during lectures and small group discussions.

**5. Lessons Learned**

Future directions include post-intervention assessment analysis, and development of scenario-based assessments that test the ability to apply concepts to real-world situations and more accurately evaluate understanding and determine future educational opportunities and curriculum development. If successful, development of modified online-only curriculum may be explored, inclusive of SOCRA contact hours, as a resource for research professionals at other cancer centers.

**Figure:**

