

Strengthening Connections: Integrating Clinical Trials Into Patient and Public Education

G. Nachaegari, S. Fraser, D. Branson, J. Moehle, T. Werner

Huntsman Cancer Institute, University of Utah

1. Background

Providing patient education and facilitating access to clinical research are two vital ways that cancer centers serve communities; however, many education and research programs are developed independently with minimal coordination between departments. Huntsman Cancer Institute (HCI) is strengthening connections between our patient and public education program and the clinical trials office to ensure that all of our patients receive timely, accurate information about clinical trials and appropriate referrals to care.

2. Goals

- Strengthen connections between clinical trials office outreach and other cancer center resources like the patient and public education department
- Increase clinical trial accruals among women, minorities, and individuals from rural/underserved areas
- Develop metrics to capture clinical trial enrollments facilitated by this interdepartmental collaboration (see figure)

3. Solutions and Methods

HCI's patient and public education department and clinical trials office are already collaborating in several areas, including:

- Clinical trial inquiries
 - Health educators at the G. Mitchell Morris Cancer Learning Center educate patients and families about clinical trials before referring them to the clinical trials office for follow-up by appropriate research teams
- Health equity and inclusion
 - The clinical trials office hosted a meeting with HCI's Spanish-speaking, American Indian, and adolescent/young adult patient navigators to discuss common misconceptions and cultural barriers to clinical trials participation
- Satellite and affiliate sites
 - The clinical trials office established a satellite site project administrator position to help oversee clinical trials at nearby HCI facilities and created an affiliate site committee to support National Cancer Institute (NCI) trial activation at more distant affiliate sites

Clinical trials office staff and investigators also support HCI's community outreach goals through:

- Joint treatment planning conferences
 - Physicians from other area hospitals routinely join HCI investigators for treatment planning conferences where clinical trials are discussed
- Clinical trial referrals

- Clinical trials staff created a secure online referral form for external providers to request information about available clinical trials for specific patients and established a clinical trials navigator position to serve as a single point of contact for trials that span more than one disease group

4. Outcomes

Although these strategies are continually being refined, we expect the following benefits as a result of our ongoing collaboration:

- Streamlined process for patients and families seeking clinical trial information
- Shorter timelines for providers referring patients to clinical trials
- Increased clinical trial accruals among women, minorities, and individuals from rural/underserved areas

5. Lessons Learned

As we continue to strengthen the relationship between HCI's education and research programs, we are in the process of incorporating the following additional strategies:

- Promoting clinical trials in rural/underserved areas via patient and public education
- Developing metrics to identify clinical trial enrollments facilitated by this partnership between groups
- Improving access and eliminating barriers to care through quarterly health equity subcommittee meetings
- Offering virtual clinical trials education as part of the NCI Community Health Educator grant
- Continuing clinical trials training for patient navigators as new staff are hired
- Providing clinical trials training for financial advocates to help reduce financial barriers to accrual
- Updating the clinical trials search functionality on the HCI website

Figure:

