

Moving From a Single Educator to an Office of Research Education and Professional Development at an NCI-Designated Comprehensive Cancer Center in Under Five Years

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1. Background

In the five years since presenting to AACI-CRI, many changes have occurred.

- Now part of an Academic Health System (AHS) with 11 oncology clinical trial sites
- Provide training to over 196 full time equivalents (FTEs) with over 20 distinct roles
- Moved from single educator to office with four educators and program coordinator
- Training is done at various locations, both remote and in-person

In addition to training, the education department is part of other projects.

- Development of clinical trial internship programs
- Collaboration with a local university in the creation of a clinical research coordinator (CRC) badge
- Clinical site for master and undergraduate students
- Creation of clinical trial education in the community

Throughout this growth, the department maintained a positive learning environment that supported staff, looked at ways to allow them to grow in their professional role, and assisted in retaining staff for delivering high-quality oncology clinical trials.

2. Goals

To coordinate and enhance clinical trial education, training, and career development activities throughout AHS.

3. Solutions and Methods

Clinical Trials Education involves a multifaceted approach. Examples of solutions and methods to meet our educational mission are below:

- Increase education team – education specialist, educators, program coordinator
- Improve orientation program through web-based platforms – Microsoft Teams and Planner
- Develop content for educating staff in a variety of different ways – in person and remotely
- Expand curriculum to other roles (i.e., protocol activation, data management, budget analysis, etc.)
- Update the two-day Fundamentals of Clinical Trials Course
- Implement an Anatomy and Physiology course geared toward the oncology clinical trial staff
- Investigator training through a web-based clinical trial toolkit
- Pilot a clinical trial internship program for college students
- Create CRC badging program with a university partner based on national guidelines
- Provide clinical trial practicum experience for students
- Health educators out in the community educating diverse populations about clinical trials

4. Outcomes

- 94 staff onboarded in 2022
- Orientation checklist created for 20 distinct clinical trial roles

Category: Training, Career Development, and Staff Retention – Work in Progress

- Since 2019, over 100 have attended a two-day clinical trial course
- Since 2022, five topics in the Anatomy and Physiology course have been presented, with over 30 staff attending each topic
- Intern transitioned to a staff role (recruitment specialist) in 2022
- Since the summer of 2022, health educators have presented over ten clinical trial community education programs

5. Lessons Learned and Future Directions

In the last five years, we have learned valuable lessons, one being the art of resiliency. Working on the east coast and in one of the first states to be hit with the pandemic, we maintained clinical trial operations and even had a 10 percent enrollment increase. We took advantage of the pandemic's challenging time and devised creative ways to work, such as remote work, utilizing web-based platforms such as Microsoft Teams, streamlining clinical trial roles, and collaborating with local colleges.

Our future directions include a stand-alone training center to open in early 2023. Other initiatives include expanding intern positions to other clinical trial departments. Our ongoing growth and success are due to the support of our organization's leadership. With this continued leadership support and the education department's hard work, seeing what the future brings will be exciting.