

Creating a Clinical Trial Referral Tool to Assist in Increasing Accruals Across a Multi-Site Cancer Center

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1. Background

Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center (SCCC) operates in a hub-and-spoke model with nine “network” sites throughout South Florida outside of the main Miami clinic. Network sites have a variety of clinical trials capabilities, as such, it is imperative that all providers can easily refer patients to any study. Additionally, the need to track these referrals for patient status was desired. To address these needs, the Clinical Trials Office (CTO) partnered with the Clinical Operations and Data Analytics teams (the “project team”) to create an EMR-integrated clinical trials referral tool and Power BI dashboard for referrals tracking.

2. Goals

1. To streamline and centralize referrals to clinical trials.
2. To create a tool that makes it easy for network physicians to refer patients to studies that are not open at their site.
3. To more easily track referral data.

3. Solutions and Methods

Working with the University of Miami’s Information Technology Epic EMR team, the project team designed a referral order set that included cancer diagnosis, which site disease group (SDG) or clinical research team (CRT) the referral is for, and at what site the patient is currently being seen. Depending on the SDG/CRT chosen, additional information may be requested via pop-up. Submitted referrals are housed in an Epic SGD/CRT dedicated queue. The queue is accessed by the CTO’s staff to assign patients and distribute referrals for prescreening. Research nurses (CRNs) review the queue every other day for new referrals and to begin the pre-screening process. A notification to the referring physician is sent to alert them the prescreening process has been initiated. Within 72 hours CRNs report back to the referring physician and accepting SDG/CRT. The Epic team added various status flags to the queue, allowing CRNs to note patient status. The Data Analytics team created a Power BI dashboard consuming and curating data directly from both Epic and the clinical trial management system, Velos, to track referral data. Key metrics include Referral to Enrollment Conversion Rate, Referrals by Network Site, Referrals by SDG/CRT, Time from Referral to Enrollment and Referrals by Provider.

4. Outcomes

In the first year of use (11/7/2023- 11/6/2024) 1184 referrals were placed by providers; to date (February 2025), over 1600 referrals have been placed with an average 19 percent conversion rate to enrollment. Breast is the highest referring SDG, with Thoracic and Head and Neck SDGs coming in second and third highest, respectively. By site, 57 percent come from the network. The other 43 percent originate from SCCC’s main campus (Miami). Providers report positive experiences; CRNs report ease of use and prefer the clinical trial referral queue rather than the management of multiple email chains and Epic inbox messages.

5. Learned and Future Directions

The project team has gathered valuable insight from stakeholders and is using feedback to further refine the project. Future directions include working with all SDGs and CRTs to ensure they are utilizing the

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pre-screening referral order and tracking additional information to gain insight into what affects patient's enrollment and participation in clinical trials.