Category: Prioritization and Scientific Review – Work in Progress

Implementing a Non-Therapeutic Feasibility Committee at a Comprehensive Cancer Center

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1. Background

National Cancer Institute (NCI) designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers are expected to assess feasibility for studies prior to moving forward in the activation process. At Moffitt Cancer Center, we created the Non-therapeutic Research Office (NTRO) in 2021 to provide centralized support for our non-therapeutic research (NTR) portfolio, comprised of 690 studies currently. A subset of Moffitt's NTR portfolio are interventional in nature and those studies had historically been reviewed (prior to NTRO) by our only existing feasibility committee at the time, which was clinical trials focused. Notably, non-therapeutic intervention studies need specialized review as they frequently have different barriers to implementation (e.g., community participation) than therapeutic clinical trials. Thus, in order to provide expert, comprehensive feasibility review of NTR projects, the NTR Feasibility Committee was formed and staffed with faculty members that have extensive experience conducting these studies at Moffitt.

2. Goals

The goal was to create an NTR Feasibility Committee with appropriate representation to assess the feasibility of non-therapeutic interventional studies to ensure study success. The intention was to better facilitate timely review by faculty from diverse academic/clinical programs with subject matter expertise in NTR and to free up resources for the existing committee to focus only on treatment trials. By convening separate committees and allowing each committee to concentrate on their areas of expertise, we aimed to assure feasibility for these specialized studies and improve activation times for all protocols.

3. Solutions and Methods

A charter was developed to support the charge of the committee by NTRO and to closely mirror the existing approach used by the Clinical Trials Office and Protocol Review and Monitoring System (PRMS) teams to ensure standardization of process, where applicable. We completed the following: 1) identified two co-chairs willing to lead the committee, 2) defined our voting quorum parameters, 3) invited a multidisciplinary group of faculty to participate as voting committee members, and 4) included non-voting operations leaders from key stakeholder departments (e.g., Shared Resources, PRMS Manager) supporting NTR studies.

4. Outcomes

The NTR Feasibility Committee meets twice monthly (45 minutes duration) and reviewed 49 studies [CY23 (17), CY24 (26), CYTD25 (5)] since our inaugural committee meeting in February 2023. Committee determinations include 42 Approvals, 4 Response Required, and 3 Denied; however, all studies not receiving approval initially were re-reviewed and subsequently approved based on incorporation of Committee feedback. Therefore, we consider these outcomes to be extremely successful and have continued to improve efficiencies for feasibility review of NTR studies.

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5. Learned and Future Directions

We learned that the NTRO was well poised to design and implement this committee. The faculty that comprises this committee have the needed expertise to review and comment on the protocols, and the NTRO leadership have well supported the committee so that it runs in a very smooth and efficient manner. It is important to have an audience of faculty in this committee that understand non-therapeutic work, and it takes the burden away from the treatment trial feasibility committee.