

## **Enhancing Workforce Readiness and Growth: A Comprehensive Orientation and Professional Development Strategy at The University of Kansas Cancer Center Clinical Trials Office**

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### **1. Background**

The University of Kansas Cancer Center (KUCC) Clinical Trials Office (CTO) achieved National Cancer Institute (NCI) Comprehensive Cancer Center status in summer 2022. One hundred and seventy-eight new staff members were then onboarded. With the CTO's rapid growth came a need for additional resources and staff support. To address these challenges, the KUCC CTO Training, Education, and Quality (TEQ) team created a structured onboarding program to provide a scaled transition for new hires and developed a professional development program for existing staff.

### **2. Goals**

Our goal was to assist staff by providing essential information beginning on their start date. TEQ strived to create and improve high-quality programming to keep staff informed of industry and organizational updates. We also worked to increase the availability of professional development opportunities to ensure the CTO workforce continued professional evolution.

### **3. Solutions and Methods**

We implemented a four-week orientation program consisting of flipped classroom models, various simulations and gamification activities, and mentoring and shadowing opportunities. This program provides teaching on topics such as clinical trial and oncology foundations, operational processes, and procedures. Content is provided through a series of presentations on the company learning management system followed by Q&A session to cover content highlights and address questions. After the Q&A, staff are provided exercises such as consenting practice and an online adverse event escape room. See Figure 1 for an orientation scheduling example.

We also implemented activities which provide staff the opportunity for professional development. By partnering with various departments in The University of Kansas Medical Center (KUMC), we provided the opportunity for staff to complete Clifton Strengths training and to attend Clinical Trial Regulations Lunch and Learns (CTRL). We also started monthly newsletters to highlight professional development topics, reinforce process and procedure updates, and provide staff with space to recognize each other.

### **4. Outcomes**

Since implementing this program, we surveyed staff to assess qualitative feedback. Results indicated a greater sense of preparedness and professional growth, reinforcing the value of our orientation and development strategies. TEQ spent 364 hours in 2023 and 299 hours in 2024 in orientation, and during this time, 31 CTO staff members certified or recertified in SOCRA in 2023 and 15 in 2024. An average of 60 staff attended each CTRL session, which also included non-CTO staff. These programs equip staff with the knowledge, skills and resources to contribute effectively to the mission of the CTO.

### **5. Learned and Future Directions**

Many in the industry did not discover clinical research intentionally, and training left much to be desired. Our goals have been to provide clinical research networking opportunities, additional continuing education, and professional development offerings. Future initiatives include development of

a staff investigator-led educational series, creation of recorded training sessions for real-time staff access, and expansion of the manager training curriculum. TEQ will establish metrics to quantify initiative results in employee satisfaction. A well-defined orientation and professional development program is critical for the success of clinical research staff. This model serves as a framework to ensure a competent and involved workforce, driving excellence in KUCC clinical trials and patient care.

**Figure**

**Figure – Staff New Hire Flowchart**

