

Restructuring Team Meetings to Reduce Stress, Improve Communication and Tackle Workload Burden

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1. Background

Stress, communication, and workload are common frustrations among research coordinators (RCs). A simple place to start tackling these frustrations was to revisit the time, structure and format of team meetings.

Prior to the restructuring, each disease team would meet twice a month for one hour. The supervisor ran the meetings, and the RCs communicated their accomplishments and ongoing tasks, topics which were also being discussed at individual one on one meetings with the supervisor. In addition to the time spent in team meetings, there was a lack of engagement and unclear value added to the RCs.

2. Goals

The goal of restructuring team meetings was to find an efficient way to reduce stress, improve communication, tackle workload burden and to minimize administrative time for both RCs and supervisor.

3. Solutions and Methods

The restructuring targeted four solutions:

1. Administrative Time
 - a. We combined the five individual team meetings into one large 1-hour monthly meeting to reduce the amount of time spent in meetings each month.
2. Workload Burden
 - a. We restructured the format to add more value and less duplicative conversations by instituting a shared OneNote with the following sections:
 - i. Recognition
 - ii. Supervisor Updates
 - iii. Best practices
 - iv. Challenges/Topics
3. Stress
 - a. We restructured the ownership of meetings to engage and empower RCs to create a more useful and enjoyable meeting.
 - b. On a rotating basis, each specific disease team is responsible to “lead” the meeting by sharing a recognition, best practice and challenge.
 - c. All RCs and the supervisor are encouraged to add to the agenda and contribute to the discussions each month.
4. Communication
 - a. We included a section for Supervisor Updates to:
 - i. provide another avenue to communicate important topics
 - ii. address questions and concerns in real time
 - iii. create a transparent flow of communication from the supervisor to the management team and back to the RCs

4. Outcomes

The restructured team meeting went into effect in October 2024. An immediately measurable outcome of this project is the reduced time spent in meetings. Meeting time for the supervisor was reduced by seven hours each month. Meeting time for each RC was reduced by one hour each month. From October 2024 to February 2025, a total of 115 administrative hours were saved compared to the previous five months.

Additionally, a survey was conducted that showed 93 percent of RCs believe the restructuring has been beneficial, 87 percent have made changes their personal processes (organization, stress management etc.) because of team meeting discussions, 14 percent reported that their research group has already made changes to processes and 50 percent plan to make changes because of the discussions.

5. Learned and Future Directions

The meeting will continue to evolve with RC feedback and suggestions to target other areas of need in addition to stress, communication and workload burden.