

## **Building Clinical Research Coordinator (CRC) Excellence: Insights from Our Clinical Research Assistant (CRA) to CRC Pipeline (Where we are now)**

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### **1. Background**

In May 2021, the Clinical Trials Office (CTO) launched the Clinical Research Assistant (CRA) Program. This initiative aims to provide oncology research experience for a period of six months to one year with the goal of transitioning into a permanent Clinical Research Coordinator (CRC) role.

### **2. Goals**

We successfully achieved our goals of improving retention rates. Moving forward, we will continue to prioritize maintaining or further enhancing retention. Our strategy includes continuing our training plan, emphasizing the quality of work and incorporating exposure to satellite sites and other CTO departments to enhance knowledge and proficiency.

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

- Skill Development: Continue immersion training with multiple disease teams to provide exposure to variety of diagnoses, trial types and workflow demands.
- Mentorship Program: Continue to pair CRAs to shadow experienced CRC mentors during their immersion phase for additional guidance, execution of job duties and real time feedback.
- Consistent Onboarding: Continue to onboard and train CRAs the same as CRCs to ensure the same foundation and preparation. The CRA will receive additional role play experiences and skill building, such as learning how to conduct a consent.

### **4. Outcomes**

- 70 percent retention rate since program start in May 2021
- 20 CRAs hired and trained
- 20 transitioned into CRC roles
- 12 currently working in CRC roles
- 2 actively completing the training program
- 6 have relocated or moved on to other positions

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

- Program Growth: The successful placement of CRAs to CRC roles highlights the need for ongoing management support to sustain the CRA program.
- Position Adjustment: Reduced the previous three CRA positions to two CRA positions due to improved retention rate.
- Immersion Success: The four-week immersion phase enhances clinical exposure, builds CRC-specific skills, and fosters stronger team integration.
- Mentorship program: Pair CRAs with experienced CRC mentors during their immersion phases for additional guidance and real-time feedback.
- Enhanced Training: Incorporate additional role-play scenarios addressing time management, organization tools, problem solving and other soft skills.
- Leadership Development: CRC mentors develop their leadership skills, promotes knowledge sharing, verifies skills learned and the need for additional training for themselves.

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

- CRA Versatility: Collaborating with multiple disease groups and departments, such as regulatory and data management, enriches the CRAs skill sets and prepares them for broader roles and knowledge.

Future Directions:

- Remote Training: Pilot the immersion program to regulatory, data management and community sites to expand training opportunities and prepare CRAs for diverse research settings.
- Continued Development: Recognize that newly placed CRCs will need continued development and exposure to achieve the next level of job knowledge and development beyond their CRA trainings and exposure.
- Mentorship Program: Formalize an ongoing mentorship program for newly placed CRCs to ensure continued development of clinical operations, and soft skills like organizational skills, efficient time management, problem solving and effective communication.