

## **Developing a Core Oncology Curriculum for Research Personnel**

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### **1. Background**

Clinical trial research staffing has evolved over many decades to the current environment: reduced research budgets, increased reporting expectations, escalating staff expense, professional nursing shortages, and movement towards interdisciplinary staffing to offset these challenges. Many of the comprehensive cancer centers now rely on diverse backgrounds within their research teams, drawing from multiple healthcare disciplines and educational pathways to build robust clinical trial operations. Team members from various disciplines have become deeply involved in oncology research, expanding their oncology knowledge, and evolving into highly valued members of a research team, ultimately taking on leadership roles within their organizations. Despite the vital importance of comprehensive oncology knowledge for research staff, standardized educational programs remain scarce. UC San Diego identified the need for development and implementation of an oncology core curriculum that would provide robust educational foundations for personnel new to the field of oncology-focused clinical trials, ensuring consistent knowledge and competency across the research workforce.

### **2. Goals**

Development of an oncology core curriculum, in small group lecture format, to be offered bi-weekly to all cancer center members, utilizing speakers, didactic content, and interactive sessions to promote engagement and learning, increase competency, and provide an investment in our employees, which would contribute to positive retention. Additional objectives include standardizing knowledge across roles, improving protocol compliance and team communication, while fostering professional development within the research enterprise.

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

Following a needs identification in November 2024, a Learning Needs Assessment Qualtrics survey and interviews with clinical trials office (CTO) and non-CTO healthcare team commenced. The survey was run between 11/4/24-12/6/24, and 116/180 personnel completed the survey (65%). Learning needs were identified in areas of disease staging and treatment, clinical care of adverse events, and background of diagnostics and interventions for eligibility. A literature search also revealed unmet needs in standardized Clinical Oncology Training and Education available to today's workforce. Based on these findings, we developed a comprehensive curriculum for research staff covering foundational oncology concepts, disease-specific pathophysiology, treatment modalities, and research-specific considerations.

### **4. Outcomes**

The Oncology Curriculum Series 2025 began in February 2025; with 3 sessions completed. Content was produced through collaboration across MCC including PIs, APPs, and Pharmacists. Initial feedback has been highly positive. As we have recently launched the educational sessions, feedback on the content and format of this curriculum is active and ongoing from our learners. Informal assessments suggest improved understanding of oncology concepts and greater confidence in protocol implementation among attendees.

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

Individual session surveys are being implemented to gather systematic feedback. Future plans include completing the full course curriculum, refining content based on participant feedback, and utilizing the small group format to maximize engagement and learning. We aim to fully integrate this educational series within the broader learning initiative at Moores Cancer Center and UC San Diego. Learning and Education is underway. Bringing this project to AACI offers the potential opportunity to share with the broader oncology community and gather additional insights to enhance our educational approach.