

## **Determining Community Experiences and Interest in Oncology Clinical Trials Through Surveys with John Theurer Cancer Center Patient Populations and Non-patient Populations in Northern New Jersey**

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### **1. Background**

As of 2024, enrollment into cancer treatment trials is estimated at 7.1 percent, with historical estimates below 5 percent (Unger et al., 2024). Prior studies show that patients face multifaceted and interrelated barriers to enrollment, including patient trust, eligibility criteria, institutional policy, and limited logistical support (Kumar et al., 2022). The Hackensack Meridian Health (HMH) John Theurer Cancer Center (JTCC) aims to overcome barriers by identifying experiences with and interest in oncology clinical trials through the Oncology Clinical Research Patient Navigator (CRPN) Program.

### **2. Goals**

- To implement an Oncology CRPN Program that determines patient and non-patient populations' experiences with and interests in clinical research.
- To quantify the percentage of JTCC patients approached regarding clinical trials during their care.
- To inform next steps in community outreach, education, recruitment, and retention efforts.

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

The Oncology CRPNs developed a survey with a combination of closed/open-ended questions. Two trained Oncology CRPNs performed clinical trial education followed by surveys with 1,186 participants over eight months. Survey success rates indicate the number of completed surveys over the number of participants given clinical trial education only. Data analysis was conducted via Microsoft Excel.

### **4. Outcomes**

Of the 2102 total people educated, 1,186 (56%) participated in the survey with a 66 percent survey success rate in JTCC and 20 percent at Community Outreach Events. The 1,186 participants include: 971 JTCC Patients, 106 Family Members or Caregivers, 82 Community Members, 18 HMH Faculty or Staff, and 9 Non-Identified. Further demographic data was collected and quantified from survey participants, including race or ethnicity, sexual orientation, and age.

Of the JTCC patients surveyed, the majority began care in 2024 (273 patients, 28.12%). Of the 930 patients who answered the question, "Has anyone at the JTCC spoken to you about clinical research before?" 371 answered yes (39.89%), 490 replied no (52.69%), and 69 were unsure (7.42%).

Of the 1173 participants who answered the questions:

- "Have you considered being in a clinical trial before?" 409 replied yes (34.89%), 721 replied no (61.47%), and 43 were unsure (3.67%).
- "Are you currently enrolled in a clinical trial?" 101 replied yes (8.61%) and 1072 replied no (91.39%).
- "Have you previously been enrolled in a clinical trial?" 115 answered yes (9.80%), 1029 replied no (87.72%), and 29 were unsure (2.47%).

Of the 670 responses to the question “What would you like to learn more about relating to clinical trials?” primary topics of interest identified were treatment efficacy (42%), side effects (40%), safety (30%), time commitment (24%), cost (23%), and patient rights (15%).

## 5. Learned and Future Directions

Data collected supports prior literature regarding barriers to clinical trial enrollment. Clinical trial education at JTCC had a higher survey success rate than that of Community Outreach Events. Moving forward the program will continue conducting clinical trial education and surveys. Efforts will be made to expand community outreach to local potential referring clinics. The Oncology CRPN program will expand into JTCC clinical operations, including tumor board meetings and screening patients for clinical trials.

Figure

