Category: Community Outreach and Engagement & Health Equity – Idea

Scaling Up Research at Eskenazi: A Strategic Plan for Growth and Inclusion

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1. Background

Sidney & Lois Eskenazi Hospital, a satellite site of the IU Simon Comprehensive Cancer Center (IUSCCC), is a public hospital in Indianapolis, Indiana, serving a high proportion of vulnerable and underserved patients. Located on the same campus as IUSCCC, the Eskenazi site operates with 1–1.5 FTEs and has averaged over eight patient enrollments per year over the past five years, maintaining 25–30 active clinical trials across multiple cancer types.

A key challenge faced by satellite sites like Eskenazi is ensuring timely data entry and patient enrollment, as these tasks rely on IUSCCC Clinical Trials Office (CTO) staff. This dependence introduces logistical hurdles, requiring physical transport of research files between sites or the scanning and electronic transmission of patient records. Any incomplete documentation leads to further delays, as IUSCCC CTO staff must then coordinate in-person visits to Eskenazi to resolve discrepancies with the research team.

2. Goals

The Eskenazi site aims to expand its research capacity through a strategic business plan, enhancing both staffing and patient enrollment over the next three years.

- 2025 Goals:
  - Increase patient enrollment to 18
  - Hire one clinical research specialist (CRS)
- 2026 Goals:
  - Increase patient enrollment to 28
  - Hire a clinical research patient specialist (CRPS) and a clinical data coordinator (CDC)
- 2027 Goals:
  - Increase patient enrollment to 45
  - Hire an additional CRS

3. Solutions and Methods

Upon achieving the 2025 goals, the addition of a full-time CRS at Eskenazi will significantly improve operational efficiency by:

- Handling data entry for all Eskenazi patients
- Confirming patient eligibility and registering subjects
- Assisting with consenting and enrolling patients in non-therapeutic trials, aligning with CRS roles at other satellite sites
- Reducing reliance on IUSCCC CTO staff, eliminating the need for frequent site visits

Expanding the Eskenazi team further in 2026 with the addition of a CRPS will enhance patient care, operational efficiency, and support for the site's growing research portfolio. This role provides a cost-effective solution to current challenges while fostering sustainable growth in clinical research activities. Additionally, introducing a CDC will help alleviate data entry responsibilities from the CRS, enabling them to focus on patient registration, consenting, and enrollment in non-therapeutic trials.

4. Outcomes

While full implementation is ongoing, we anticipate that expanding the Eskenazi research team will result in:

- Increased patient enrollment
- Improved operational efficiency
- Enhanced patient experience
- More efficient data management

As the team expands, we will track key performance indicators (KPIs), including enrollment growth, deviation rates, and data entry turnaround times, to assess the impact of these staffing changes.

5. Learned and Future Directions

Expanding the Eskenazi research site presents a significant opportunity to increase clinical trial awareness and participation among underrepresented populations, ultimately enhancing the diversity of clinical trial enrollment. By building a dedicated research team, we aim to reduce barriers to participation and improve access to cutting-edge therapies for the vulnerable communities Eskenazi serves.

Looking ahead, a key future initiative will be to incorporate translation services to provide clinical trial materials in patients' native languages, further supporting equitable access and engagement in research.