

Centralizing Weekly Admissions Communication to Reduce Email Burden and Enhance Coordination for Inpatient Clinical Research

C. Ordonez Ferri, B. Bodin, E. Ernest, A. Joshi, J. Mehnert, B. Pothuri

Laura and Isaac Perlmutter Cancer Center at NYU Langone Health

1. Background

When NYU began utilizing the inpatient oncology unit for clinical research trials in 2017, there was no standardized communication process to summarize anticipated admissions or provide a structured forum for questions. Instead, multiple separate email threads were generated for each individual admission. This fragmented approach created a substantial email burden and complicated coordination between inpatient staff and clinical research teams caring for research participants.

2. Goals

The primary objective was to streamline communication among key stakeholders, promote closed-loop communication, enhance collaboration between the inpatient unit and clinical research teams, and reduce the overall volume of emails through a more efficient and transparent process.

3. Solutions and Methods

Beginning in May 2024, we created a single, centralized weekly email thread encompassing all anticipated research admissions. We piloted this new workflow to improve communication with the inpatient unit and track research admissions. On a weekly basis, an email is sent to all research teams requesting information on anticipated admissions for the following week. By Thursday, responses are compiled into a consolidated list, verified for accuracy, and then shared with the inpatient team. This process enables inpatient staff to ensure that admission orders are entered correctly, in a timely manner, and that staffing is appropriate for the expected patient acuity. Utilizing a single ongoing email chain for all admissions improved closed-loop communication and reduced redundant email traffic related to research admissions.

4. Outcomes

In the six months prior to implementation of the weekly admissions email, there was an average of 102.2 emails per month regarding research admissions, with an average of 4.8 (Median 4.5, Range 5) admissions per month. After implementation of the new workflow, the average number of emails decreased 50.8 percent to 50.3 (Median 36, Range 67) per month, despite an increase in admissions to an average of 6.2 per month. Following the introduction of a shared, centralized document for staff to complete, the monthly email volume over the subsequent three months decreased further to an average of 42.7 emails (Median 39, Range 15), with a continued increase in admissions to an average of 10 patients per month. These findings suggest that the new process improved communication efficiency while supporting a higher clinical research volume.

5. Lessons Learned and Future Directions

Since its inception, the weekly admissions communication process has been refined and expanded. Additional staff have been included on the email distribution list to further strengthen collaboration. The team responsible for placing admission orders is now included, improving real-time awareness of potential issues and enabling proactive problem solving. Building on the success of this model for research admissions, the weekly email now also includes patients who may require transfer from the outpatient infusion center to the inpatient treatment room when research assessments or collections

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extend beyond regular clinic hours. Additionally, the weekly grid has been transitioned to a centralized, shared document accessible to all relevant staff. This has improved record keeping for past admissions and further reduced email burden by limiting the need for separate, admission-specific email threads. Moving forward, we would like to explore ways to automate the e-mail process after completion of the grid.