

# Measuring Effectiveness of the Clinical Research Competency Training (CRCT) Program for Clinical Research Professionals

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## Background

In January of 2024, the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center implemented a comprehensive Clinical Research Competency Training (CRCT) program. The goal of the CRCT is to provide a robust fundamental training for clinical research staff.



## Goals

- Develop a uniform, comprehensive training using the Joint Task Force (JTF) guidelines for the clinical research workforce at UT MD Anderson
- Strengthen foundation knowledge and provide consistent orientation across departments, and support the development of a robust, well-prepared clinical research workforce for the institution
- Improve clinical research monitoring and audit outcomes
- Evaluate feedback provided by learners to improve future training

## Solution and Methods

Using the framework developed by the Joint Task Force for Clinical Trial Competency and collaborating with key leaders and content experts, a comprehensive foundational curriculum was developed, integrating oncology as well as institutional elements. A variety of topics are included in the training program: Introduction to clinical research and oncology, essential and source documents, research roles, site operations and structure at the institution, submission of protocols to regulatory bodies, subject and protocol management, data management, trial oversight, ancillary services, and an overview of offices supporting clinical research.

## Key Components

The program consists of three key components: (1) a CRCT Competency Guide incorporating core JTF-based competencies; (2) foundational training sessions conducted both in virtual and in-person lectures; (3) department-specific training focusing on oncology and clinical trials. New staff hired into the institution are enrolled in CRCT cohorts within the first few weeks of their hire date. The curriculum consists of five weeks of training.

Learners are also assigned to a preceptor and manager from their department and assigned to a training specialist from the Division of Clinical Research. Feedback surveys were gathered from learners after sessions and after completion of the program.

## Outcomes

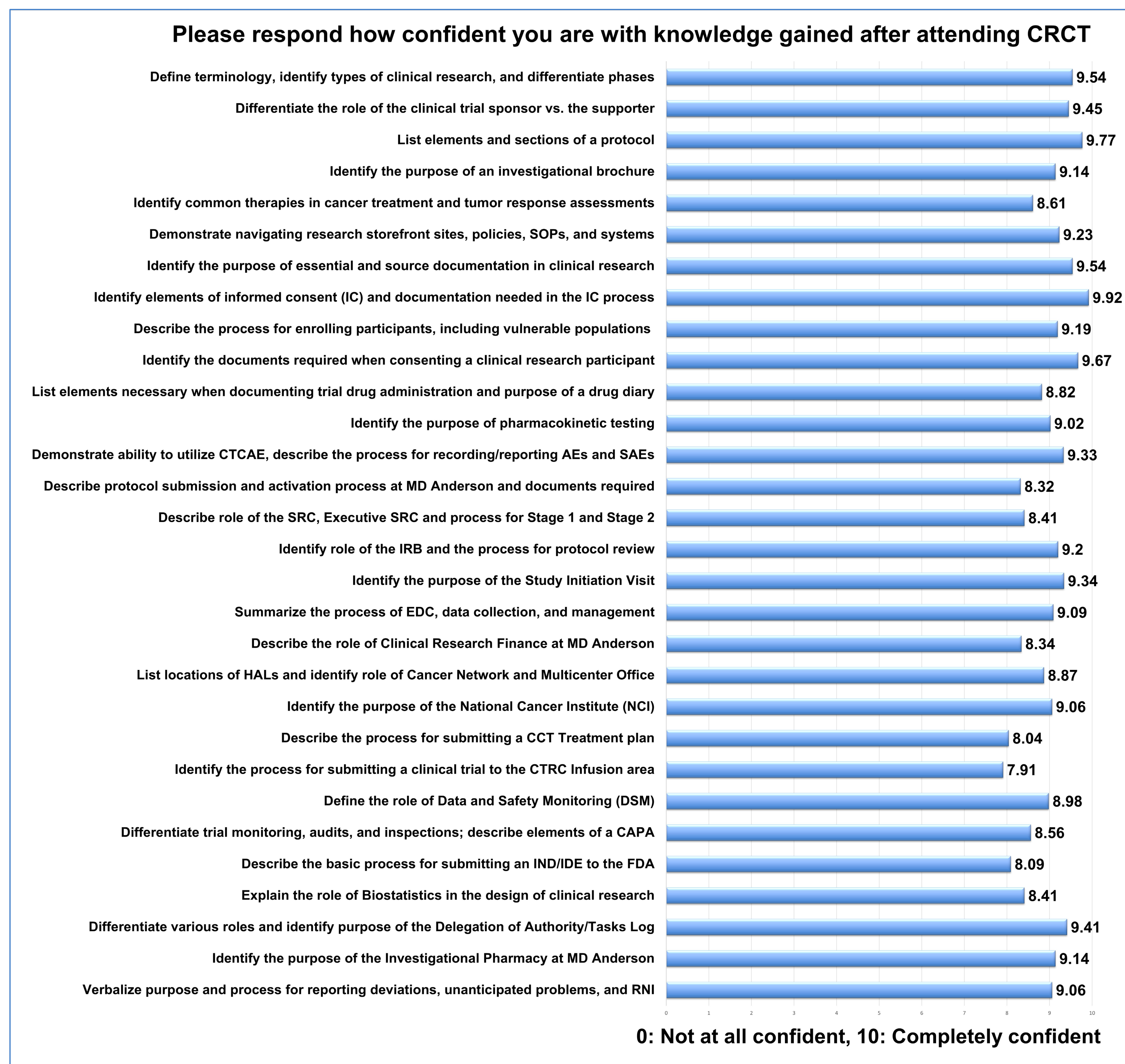
Since launch, a total of 996 staff members have enrolled in CRCT, including clinical research staff across multiple roles. Enrollment increased from 348 participants in 2024 to 597 participants in 2025.

A survey assessed participants' confidence in the knowledge gained. Of the ninety-five survey respondents from the 2024 cohorts, forty-three were new hires. The confidence scores for new hires averaged between eight and nine on a zero-to-ten scale, with the lowest average at 7.91, indicating strong perceived knowledge gain.

## Impact

CRCT is making a positive impact in the training and onboarding of new clinical research staff based on the outcomes previously mentioned. Having a structured, standardized training across the institution is beneficial to new research staff.

Audit outcomes also improved following CRCT implementation. Between fiscal years 2024 and 2025, internal audit findings decreased across informed consent (from 50 percent to 35 percent), eligibility (from 43 percent to 39 percent), study assessments (from 39 percent to 31 percent), and source data verification (from 66 percent to 56 percent). These reductions, illustrated below, reflect meaningful improvements in documentation accuracy, protocol adherence, and overall research conduct.



## Future Direction

Standardized competency-based training is essential for ensuring consistency and quality across the clinical research workforce. Early feedback indicates that the CRCT program provides a solid foundation for learning and is well-received by new staff.

Learners expressed a need for greater scheduling flexibility to accommodate clinical responsibilities. In response, a structured learning plan was added to the Learning Management System with self-scheduling, progress tracking, and automated certificates. To further reinforce learning and promote ongoing professional development, the training team incorporated monthly Clinical Research Educational Sessions offering topic-focused opportunities for continued learning. Ongoing evaluation and refinement will continue to strengthen workforce development and institutional research quality.

## References

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