

## **Implementation of a Non-Therapeutic Research Office at an NCI-Designated Cancer Center**

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### **1. Background**

The Non-Therapeutic Research Office (NTRO) supports all Moffitt non-therapeutic human subjects research in an ethical, compliant, innovative, and flexible manner. NTRO was created in October 2021 to centralize all non-therapeutic research at the institution, mirroring the existing Clinical Trials Office (CTO). This office drives impactful science through (a) interactive communication and coordination with stakeholders, (b) providing expert guidance on study conceptualization and planning, (c) efficient study activation and implementation, and (d) research staffing and oversight supported by centralized training and services. NTRO manages a variety of study types including, but not limited to, clinical and community-based research, ancillary and correlative studies, industry-sponsored studies, and studies supported by the NTRO PEARL (Population Engagement and Research Laboratory). In addition, a non-therapeutic activation team is available to facilitate rapid study activation. NTRO staff work closely with the faculty to adhere to research protocols and ensure compliance with participants, biospecimens, and data.

### **2. Goals:**

- Increase faculty partnerships
- Alignment with institutional processes/departments
- Increase research quality while decreasing faculty burden

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

- **Collaboration with existing processes:** NTRO leadership worked diligently to align processes with existing practices across the institution.
- **Building Feasibility for NTRO Studies:** NTRO leadership identified a need for creating a feasibility infrastructure for non-therapeutic studies. This was created apart from the treatment-specific feasibility committee to provide greater support to NTRO and reduce the burden on the treatment feasibility committee. A charter was developed, and a multidisciplinary group of faculty serve on the committee. This is run purely by NTRO leadership and administrative support.
- **Enhancing Faculty Partnership:** NTRO Leadership engaged the faculty by creating a “NTRO Roadshow” presentation that describes its services, how to engage with the office, and provided metrics around the efficiency and efficacy gains when utilizing our services. These presentations were presented at division meetings, tumor boards, departmental research meetings, and retreats. A Faculty Advisory Committee was also developed as a sounding board for the department build-out. This Committee helped NTRO leadership with: deciding on study scopes supported, change management, improved support for staff, aligning job descriptions, assessment of finances, and decision tree development. NTRO started with 460 studies and has grown to 704 as of 2/2026.

**4. Outcomes:**

- Centralized all non-therapeutic research at the cancer center under one office.
- Improved retention of staff (decreased turnover from 40 percent to 8 percent), decreased activation times, and significantly increased recognized revenue from industry sponsors.

**5. Lessons Learned and Future Directions:**

NTRO has exceeded the goals of the institution and even what the team originally envisioned. The office has proven to be very helpful in supporting non-therapeutic work and growing the portfolio of studies to meet the investigators' needs. We continue to expand our team and services provided, activating more studies, reaching more patients, and advancing cancer control and prevention research. We are also evaluating our policies and their alignment with those in the CTO. Our faculty utilize both offices for their research portfolios, and this alignment helps to maintain consistency in practice that reduces faculty burden and increases quality of research.