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IECRN Findings: Training and Professional Development

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Now, we will talk about training and professional development. This presentation follows the same format.

We defined training. I'm not going to go into details about that. But we did make a distinction between training and professional development, and professional development basically builds on previous skills and enhances the skills.

Here were some of the findings that we had, that we found. Inadequate funding, there is the money issue coming up again. It is a major challenge. As you would expect, newer networks are more likely to provide financial support for site level professional development and NIH clinical research networks place a greater emphasis on training and monitoring these activities.

There seems to be a lack of emphasis on professionalism. This quote emphasizes the point that while the network encourages the pursuit of professional activities, they don't consistently financially support these efforts.

And another finding that we found was that in order to build site capacity, one of the major activities was training

and professional development. So there is an opportunity for more research.

These are the types of professional development opportunities. Compared to non-clinical research networks, clinical research networks were significantly more likely to provide professional development opportunities for data management staff.

So there, again, comes the issue of IT and we will hear more about that.

This slide shows the types of professional development programs that CRN staff participate in. As you'll note, it is pretty low, which is consistent with the previous findings.

The most frequent type of program participation was investigator awards and new investigator training programs.

Another training theme is buy-in. This quote recognizes that they want to get staff trained, but the staff seem to be resistant, and, again, I think this is another opportunity to find out why. Is it because they are too busy? Is it because they think they know all there is to know about clinical research?

However, there is one bright spot. I'm sure there is more than one, but one of them that I would like to share with you today is one that we found in best practice.

This was a network that identified the need to create buy-in for the staff. So they wanted to keep things very simple and recognize that it was important to provide good technical support to their team. So their strategy was to conduct a box call.

I was a like, "What is a box call?" That was a new one for me. But what they did was, in advance, they would send the site a box, they called it a garbage pale size box, with necessary materials to conduct the study and then they would have a phone call with the site shortly after this box was received.

So they could begin explaining the content and the purpose, so that once they received all these materials, the site staff would not be overwhelmed and think, "Oh, my gosh, I am never going to be able to do this, it is too complicated." But they would work step-by-step with them and established a relationship with them.

The site had a resource that they could turn to should they have questions and they could start the protocol off using the right processes because they understood what was involved.

Another theme is time. We have talked a lot about time. So, again, it is how to balance the priorities between taking care of the patients clinically, conducting research, and

having time to learn more about a protocol or research yourself.

So this example, the issue is time. So they created sort of take-aways for the staff. They were short, little snippets. The strategy there was to use a multi-dimensional approach of didactic and experimental.

So in the process of protocol training, they would have actually interactive kinds of things. Not only would they give the protocol and go through it, but they would have role plays and it was far more interactive.

Then afterwards, they would have the people -- it says participants, but the people at the site are the participants -- would come back and tell them what they thought of the training, how they could make it better, and the network then measured how successful that particular site was in terms of recruiting patients, retaining patients, and keeping people in the study

So what conclusions can we draw from this? There is a lack of emphasis on professional development activities at the network level. We need to think about how we can change that.

Training needs to be timely, specific and relevant, and we need to emphasize the value of training for improving quality and efficiency. It is one of those situations where, if you invest up front, you will reap the benefits in terms of more efficient, productive staff.

Thank you.

[Applause.]