

## BOTTOM LINE



Clinical trials provide participants access to new treatment options and high-quality care.



Clinical trials advance science and will help to find new cancer treatments.



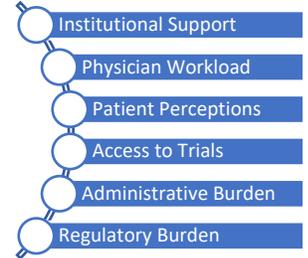
A culture of research at a practice will foster clinical trial engagement and positively impact quality.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in new changes, challenges, and uncertainties for clinical practices and research programs. This At-A-Glance summary was developed by the ASCO Research Community Forum (RCF) to provide a resource for research programs who may need to make the case for prioritizing clinical trials at their institution during and after the pandemic.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS, TIPS, AND BEST PRACTICES

Research is essential to finding new treatments for cancer, yet it is estimated that less than five percent of adults with cancer participate in clinical trials.<sup>1,2</sup> Additionally, only about 13 percent of oncologists are involved as clinical investigators.<sup>3</sup> Barriers to participation in research for healthcare providers includes lack of institutional support, physician workload, patient perceptions about clinical trials, limited site and patient access to clinical trials infrastructure (particularly in rural settings), and administrative and regulatory burdens.<sup>4</sup> Patient-reported barriers include concerns about side effects and/or reduced quality of life, unease about efficacy of experimental therapies or receiving placebo, and the assumption that trials are a “last ditch effort.”<sup>5</sup> Making the case for clinical research participation is important in order to ensure that patients have timely access to new treatments and to help advance science toward better treatments and a cure for cancer. This At-A-Glance focuses on making the case for research at an oncology practice.

### Examples of Barriers to Clinical Practice Participation in Clinical Trials



Outlining the benefits and potential impact of research for patients, the oncology practice, and the broader community is an important strategy to make the case for clinical trials. Clinical trials provide participants with access to novel treatments, an opportunity to play an active role in their health care and may improve patient outcomes. Participation in clinical research helps physicians and staff stay current on the latest treatment options.<sup>6</sup> Capability of providing clinical trials elevates the level of quality of the cancer program.

## 4 Steps to Make the Case for Research at an Oncology Practice

### Step 1: Engagement – Involve Organization Leadership

- Engagement strategies include:
  - Inviting leadership to research-related meetings (e.g., cancer committee meetings, multidisciplinary tumor boards, grand rounds)
  - Educating leadership on “the why” (e.g., ensuring patients have access to new treatments, increasing quality of cancer care and referrals of the institution, increasing competitive edge, increasing historically low participation rates, delayed progress towards new and/or better treatments and ultimately a cure for cancer)
  - Sharing poignant examples of impact on patients (e.g., patient and family stories, community impact, referrals to outside institutions due to lack of clinical trials)
  - Dispelling myths around cancer research (e.g., clinical trials are not a last resort and participants are not “guinea pigs”, clinical trials offer best management of care<sup>7</sup>)
  - Disseminating clinical trial results and patient care implications in real time (e.g., sharing FDA approvals and changes to standard of care along with number of local patients participating in such trials)
  - Sharing the elevated quality of care and safety effects in other departments (pathology, radiology, surgery, radiation oncology) due to providing clinical trials



### Step 2: Awareness and Impact – Elevate Awareness About the Impact of Clinical Trials

- Strategies to raise awareness about the importance of research at the practice include:
  - Patient care – ensuring patients have access to new treatments and high-quality care, and are satisfied with their care
  - Direct and indirect revenue – research participation may create jobs and generate new revenue streams, reach patients outside the usual market and avoid outmigration, improve patient retention and keep patients in the community, attract philanthropic

support, offer grant opportunities and industry revenue, foster more rapid adoption and compliance with evidence-based practices and pathways

- Quality – research may be a surrogate for quality and value-based care and may be associated with reimbursement for care. Rigorous quality research standards must be met, which may improve patient care, satisfaction, and outcomes (especially when the trial is provided close to the patient’s home and support network)
- Accreditation – clinical trial participation provides an opportunity for sites and staff to achieve research-specific accreditation. Clinical trial participation is required for American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer (CoC) and National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers (NAPBC) Accreditation programs. Examples for community sites are QOPI certification, ACS Joint commission on cancer, SOCRA CCRP. Wondering if ACRES or TransCelerate can be used as examples? Reference for accreditation <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp1806934>
- Innovation – research fosters innovation within the institution and in the field, as well as rapid adoption of new treatments

### **Step 3: Collaboration – Build Relationships and Overcome Institutional Barriers**

- Strategies to find novel ways to increase accrual and develop a robust clinical trials program include:
  - Collaborating with others (e.g., sites, networks, disciplines, etc.)
  - Leveraging technology to maximize existing resources and increase efficiencies (e.g., utilize electronic medical records for adverse event collection, patient tracking and research billing, consider emerging technology solutions for patient matching, using tools that make patient referrals easier such as TransMed, Deep Lens VIPER<sup>8</sup>, or EAPathways<sup>9</sup> to proactively screen patients)
  - Engage referring physicians by minimizing the referral burden, proactively updating providers about their patients’ progress, keeping the lines of communication open throughout the trial, and showing appreciation for their assistance in the clinical trial process.<sup>10</sup>
  - Having one referring contact person irrespective of the trial. A simple EMR communication to the designated contact person will be more efficient than finding the appropriate coordinator for each separate trial.
  - Forming a local oncology research interest group and encouraging other hospital systems to attend
  - Starting an institutional research newsletter to send quarterly updates to staff and administration
  - Building the “culture of research” into existing workflows (e.g., recognizing high accruing physician investigators and research staff with acknowledgement and/or financial rewards)
  - Engage and educate the community to increase the awareness and acceptance of clinical research. This could be accomplished through patient stories, town halls, and social media

### **Step 4: Culture – Create a Culture of Research**

- Once buy-in is established, research culture can be infectious! Strategies to foster a culture of research include:
  - Embedding research staff into the clinical practice and workflows – this is critical to building research culture into a practice
  - Planning an educational series about research
  - Providing training on clinical trials
  - Including research staff in oncology research steering committee/cancer committee
  - Establishing institutional research committee and periodic brainstorming meetings
  - Having the research team present at tumor board meetings and discuss trials and/or screen patients prospectively
  - Encouraging mentorship among physicians and among research staff

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## OTHER RESOURCES

- Flora D. [Clinical Research in Oncology: Building the case](#) (Webinar). ASCO Research Community Forum and Oncology Nursing Society. 2019.
- Flora D. Building an Effective Research Program: Making the argument. ASCO Research Community Forum (Webinar). 2018. Contact ASCO staff for access: [researchcommunityforum@asco.org](mailto:researchcommunityforum@asco.org).
- American Society of Clinical Oncology Research Community Forum Toolkit: [The Business of Clinical Trials - Optimizing Clinical Trial Sites and Implementing Best Practices](#). Alexandria, VA; American Society of Clinical Oncology; 2018.



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