The Impact of Successful Site Relationships

August 2021

COLLABORATE FORWARD

August's Sites NOW topic, "The Impact of Successful Site Relationships", focused on the critical importance of site partnerships and shared ideas on how sponsors, CROs, and solution providers can better work with sites to ensure efficient and effective communication and collaboration.

A common theme throughout the discussion reiterated that relationships with sites should aim to always be helpful and collaborative with trust and respect as key foundations. For a relationship to be successful, sites need to be heard and respected.

Where sites want to be heard and share their feedback depends; some want to be involved in protocol design, others want to contribute to operations. Ultimately, it's about bringing in site input at the right time. However, sponsors and CROs should always consider what sites are sharing as leading indicators and activities that will not work for the protocol. By bringing sites into the development stage, sites can recognize potential barriers to recruitment and retention and can offer solutions. If CROs are unable to build in a site's request, explain why so sites can better understand why that solution may not be feasible currently.

Sites have continued to share feedback that they would like CROs and sponsors to interact with them as partners as well as focusing on better attention to detail, understanding timing of cycles, and "owning" the experience of working together. One way to ensure this would be for sponsors and CROs to have dedicated employees to facilitate the experience between the investigator and site. Every site needs to know who to contact – who is the right person in various aspects of the business that sites can reach out to?

Sites also mentioned that minimizing new training needed and working with sites on their existing systems benefits all stakeholders in clinical research. Sponsors and CROs can trust sites' experience and knowledge and shouldn't require training for every new tool. Panelists encouraged sites and CROs to question what's in the protocol to determine if a process, form, widget, etc is still needed, especially when it doesn't add value and burdens the site. When implementing new technology at the site, consider three questions: "How does it make site data better, workdays a little easier, and our patients better off?"

Another common theme in this discussion advocated for sites to proactively share their expectations, challenges, and needs. This can happen in the contract negotiation stage, throughout the study, or after completion to help sponsors and CROs better understand where bottlenecks may exist, as well as ideas to improve future trials and ultimately their relationship with sites.

Part of the SCRS mission is to advocate for better site relationships by being an active partner in industry-wide initiatives and dialogues. Join us in our mission by engaging in the important discussions at Sites NOW meetings, convening each month. Learn more at https://myscrs.org/scrs-sites-now/

Sites NOW August panelists included Darren Cowan, Area Head, Americas Global Site & Study Operations at Pfizer, Karen McIntyre, Global Lead Catalyst Program and Site Relationships at Syneos Health, and David Vulcano, Vice President, Research Compliance & Integrity at HCA Healthcare.

SCRS Sites NOW is a virtual discussion and content project created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and focused on the changing landscape clinical research sites and industry partners now face. Each session is centered around a singular topic; in January, the topic was the Evolution of Patient Engagement. Attendees benefit from an opening presentation hosted by an industry leader who provides a unique perspective and meaningful metrics on the topic at hand, then break out into groups for a dynamic discussion guided by relevant queries designed to identify areas of opportunity for participants in the clinical research pipeline.

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