

Surveying Staff Satisfaction to Work Toward Improved Employee Retention

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1. Background

The UPMC Hillman Cancer Center clinical research services (CRS) department supports oncologic clinical trials across 34 central and community network sites. Over 200 full time staff, working in clinical, fiscal, regulatory, operational, quality assurance, and managerial positions, make up the department. Central site staff are grouped by disease modality center (DMC), whereas community network staff work across all DMCs.

Not unlike other areas of health care, staff turnover within CRS has been exacerbated during the pandemic. Overall turnover in the department in 2021 was approximately 30 percent. A staff satisfaction survey was launched in spring 2022 to elucidate sources of staff enjoyment and stress within the department.

2. Goals

- Broad staff participation in survey completion with representation across community network sites and at least 60 percent staff completion rate
- Identify areas for improvement within the department, as well as understand what staff enjoy about their work to make positive changes in the department and ultimately stabilize retention

3. Solutions and Methods

- An anonymous staff survey with 13 Likert-scale, 2 open-ended, and 2 multiple-response questions was deployed to identify areas of employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction within CRS
- One question on staff locality (e.g., central site, Magee Womens Hospital, community network site) and one on duration of employment in CRS will allow for data interpretation from these two lenses
- Likert-scale questions (5-point scale, ranging from “disagree” to “agree”) were centered around employee feelings of support and satisfaction in their role and in their disease center or community site; multiple-response questions varied based on how the employee responded to the duration of employment question, but covered themes such as training, enjoyable versus challenging aspects of CRS, and reasons for retention
- The survey was self-administered in SharePoint and will be opened bi-annually to identify trends between employment duration and satisfaction or dissatisfaction; survey redeployment will also allow leadership to track effectiveness of changes implemented towards making improvements in the department

4. Outcomes

Staff were provided a two-week window in which to complete the survey. Staff were very receptive to providing feedback and 80 percent of staff completed the survey. Preliminary results show staff enjoy being part of cutting-edge cancer research and having a flexible work schedule. Staff see opportunities for career growth and recognition for good performance as areas for improvement. Preliminary results show workload is a concern and 51 percent of staff feel overwhelmed in their roles.

5. Lessons Learned and Future Directions

This method of surveying staff was an effective way to get feedback and insight on employee satisfaction and workload. After results are analyzed, department leadership will present the findings, and staff-led working groups will be formed to generate ideas to enhance recognition and address other areas of improvement identified in the survey.