

Workforce Development Continuum of the Yale Cancer Center's Clinical Trials Office

A. Gateman, S. Raboin, J. Rowe, K. Pavlik

Yale Cancer Center, Yale School of Medicine

1. Background

The Yale Cancer Center (YCC) Clinical Trials Office (CTO) is committed to building a diverse clinical research workforce by attracting, growing, and retaining talent. Despite many improvements, the number of open positions in the greater clinical research workforce outnumbers the number of clinical research professionals.

2. Goals

The YCC CTO aims to recruit and develop clinical research professionals that reflect the communities we serve while raising broader awareness of the clinical research profession.

3. Solutions and Methods

The YCC CTO's workforce development program employs external and internal strategies across a continuum of career developmental stages.

Efforts focused on awareness and recruitment include:

- Leading a four-week virtual summer clinical research exposures group of high school and undergraduate students with international representation.
- Partnering with a local university to develop and teach a specialized undergraduate clinical research track in their health sciences degree program.
- Attending local undergraduate and graduate internship and career fairs.
- Routinely hosting undergraduate interns.
- Partnering with the YCC Investigational Pharmacy to host pharmacy residents.

Efforts focused on stabilizing and strengthening the workforce include:

- Dedicated training resources to support onboarding and continuing education, including internal peer mentorship, networking opportunities, and support for leadership development, professional certification, and conference attendance.
- Development and implementation of career ladders, providing the opportunity to grow careers from within.
- Establishment of a staff-led Culture and Communication Committee with three subcommittees focusing on communication, social engagement, and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.
- Development of a workload acuity tool and expansion of the clinical operations float pool allowing for a nimbler workforce that can manage ever increasing trial complexity and cover staff leaves and/or vacancies.

4. Outcomes

The following include early successes of workforce development:

- Summer exposure program participants committed to further develop their projects focused on clinical research awareness for pediatric oncology patients.
- The continued strengthened partnership with the local university has seen growth in class sizes for the clinical research track. This has led to an increase in undergraduate interns, many of whom

come from underrepresented groups. The YCC CTO has hired three of four interns upon their graduation into entry-level positions.

- While still in their infancy, the Culture and Communication committees serve to connect staff in a meaningful way and create positive change within our organization.
- The CTO vacancy rate has consistently stayed under 10 percent with a turnover rate of under 2.5 percent during the last quarter.
- A diverse CTO workforce, with about 30% of members identifying as coming from an underrepresented group, helps to ensure we reflect the communities we serve.

5. Lessons Learned and Future Directions

The YCC CTO recognizes that a workforce development program requires a long-term commitment with continued evaluation and monitoring to gauge long term success. Investing efforts in a multipronged approach has been successful in reaching towards our goals.

Future directions include expanding our intern program to include nursing and graduate students, providing additional training opportunities to support professional development, and focusing efforts on the newly established subcommittees.