

Cancer Center's Journey: Launching a Satellite Investigational Pharmacy at NYU Langone Health - Perlmutter Cancer Center

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1. Background

Operations at the Clinical Trials Office (CTO) at Perlmutter Cancer Center (PCC) are decentralized over multiple locations with research patients being seen and treated in several buildings. The Investigational Pharmacy (IP) was housed at the PCC's original location on 34th Street, requiring investigational product to be transported same day to participants receiving treatment at other locations, which was logistically challenging and lengthened the wait time for treatment. In 2022, the accrual of participants in treatment trials at the 34th Street location accounted for only 57 percent of the total Manhattan accrual. The Ambulatory Care Center at 38th Street provided care and treatment for 35 percent of these accruals and housed four clinical trial disease management groups (DMGs).

2. Goals

The main goal was reduction of patient wait times to treatment. Corollaries included patient safety, patient satisfaction, improved staff scheduling and ratios, and potentially increased number of treatment patients per day.

3. Solutions and Methods

The CTO received approval to establish a satellite IP in the preexisting standard pharmacy space at the cancer center's newest expansion location on 38th Street. A standard operating procedure (SOP) was created outlining the requirements of the satellite IP as well as the terms of the physical movement of investigational product. Key points included licensing, hours of operation, staffing, capacity and scope, software systems, physical equipment such as freezers and hood details, as well as security and access. The SOP also included a detailed moving plan that listed the specific DMGs and specific studies to utilize the new satellite IP, methods of obtaining and documenting sponsor approval for move, supplies and equipment necessary for physical movement of investigational product, and chain of custody documentation and tracking in Vestigo, an online drug accountability system. The plan detailed moving procedures, method, and process of temperature monitoring during transit, as well as documentation and final physical inspection of investigational products upon receipt at the new location.

4. Outcomes

Patient wait time was successfully reduced from an average of 110 minutes in the year prior to the relocation (March 21, 2022 - March 20, 2023) to an average of 79 minutes in the 11 months since (March 22, 2023 – March 1, 2024) based on time from order to administration for 1485 and 1503 investigational treatment encounters, respectively.

5. Lessons Learned and Future Directions

Establishing an entirely new satellite IP location is a major undertaking that requires detailed planning, organization, and execution. We hope that our site's successful experience may be utilized as guidance by other institutions looking to expand their investigational pharmacies. The established process and workflow will also be used for future operational expansion at our institution. Additionally, further evaluation is planned to assess the impact on key goals of patient satisfaction, staffing, and ability to increase the overall number of patients treated.