"Celebrating" Occupational Health and Safety
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Problem Statement:
An occupational health and safety program for personnel working with laboratory animals is required by PHS Policy as well as the Guide. As part of fulfilling this requirement, the Worker Protection Program was established at UT Southwestern, in which individuals submit an electronic Health History Questionnaire (HHQ) form annually. One challenge of a large animal program is to ensure that each individual submits this form by the requested deadline annually. To address this challenge, UT Southwestern developed an electronic reporting tool to aid in the oversight of form submissions. In addition, the due date of the annual submission was set to be in the same month as the individual’s birthday. Meaning, individuals may more easily remember to complete an annual form if they have another significant date to associate the deadline with. With the anniversary of their birthday, the individual can celebrate their continued safety while working with research animals!

Description of the research:
The Worker Protection Program (WPP) is a program administered by Occupational Health Clinic at UT Southwestern, designed to promote a safe work environment by minimizing the risk of illness or injury associated with working with or around research animals. Initial enrollment in the program is accomplished through the submission of a Health History Questionnaire (HHQ). This questionnaire is also required to be updated annually in order to evaluate the continued safety of those working with research animals. The IACUC Office made the due date of the annual HHQ submission to be within the month of the individual’s birth date. By tying the submission deadline to an already significant date of the individual (their birthday) it may allow for a more sustainable system of submission compliance. To address the oversight process of ensuring annual completion of an HHQ, the IACUC office, Occupational Health Clinic, and Information Resources (IR) collaborated to create an electronic submission system and reporting tools. This electronic system allows for auto-reminders to be sent to individuals at the beginning of their birthday month, prompting them to complete the annual HHQ submission. To keep the information of the form private, the form submissions go directly to the Occupational Health Clinic for review. The electronic system allows the clinic to review the form and either approve it or return it to the submitter with comments, if follow up information is needed. Since the IACUC Office is not involved in the review of these forms, but is responsible for ensuring compliance with submitting the form annually, reporting tools to track submission status were also created. The first report is a comprehensive list of all the individuals who submitted a form. It includes the name and employee ID number of the individual as well as the date they submitted the form and the date in which the clinic reviewed the form. This allows the IACUC office to see current and historical data for all submission since the dawn of the system. This form is easily searchable and can
be organized chronologically (with the most recent submissions appearing first) or alphabetically. All form submissions and reviews are time stamped in the report, allowing the IACUC office to see the completion of these tasks in real time. This report is especially useful for the IACUC office to confirm when an individual has submitted a form, which is a required step in gaining initial access to an animal facility or re-instatement of access if it was cut off due the failure to complete the form by the appropriate deadline (within the month of their birthday).

A second report was also created to target the submission status of an individual in regards to their birthday month. This report includes the name and employee ID number of the individual as well as their birthdate and the submission date of their most recently submitted form. The report can be sorted by birthday month to assess which individuals need follow up reminders to submit an annual HHQ and eventually which individuals will need their access cut off due to failure of completion. This report is used most often in the IACUC office to identify individuals who successfully completed their annual submission within their birthday month, and which individuals require follow up action. To demonstrate the activity of the program, monthly metrics are presented to the IACUC. These metrics are intended to show how many forms are submitted monthly and the time frame in which they are reviewed by an occupational health nurse.

The following values are provided to the Committee monthly:

- Number of HHQs submitted and reviewed the preceding month
  - Of that number, a breakdown of the following is provided: the number of initial submissions, annual follow-ups, summer student submissions, and percentage of submissions that were evaluated within a two business day time frame

- Clinical Follow-Ups and Events Involving Animals
  - The number of follow-up visits (both minor and major) as well as the number of clinical events involving animals

Improvements to the HHQ submission process are continuously being evaluated. UT Southwestern is in the process of developing an updated electronic system for HHQ submission that will reduce administrative burden by only allowing a singular form to be active for an individual at one time, thus removing the possibility for duplicate submissions. The new system will also allow for improved workflow transparency, so that the end user can view the status of their submission as well as access a copy of their HHQ more easily at any time.