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Protocol Review Cycle Times - Who’s to Blame?
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Problem Statement:
Is your IACUC review process to blame for slowing down research? IACUC programs come under fire for taking too long to review protocol submissions. We often hear investigators claim "...The IACUC process is slow and preventing me from starting my research..." Is the blame justified? Do we fully understand if/where the gaps are in our programs? How do we address these concerns? The intended outcome of this data is to show that the investigator can influence the cycle time for protocol reviews. My hypothesis is that not only does the IACUC control the speed for protocol approval, but also the investigator.

Description of the research:
Our IACUC fell victim to the same scrutiny faced by many other organizations. We had improved our program by utilizing an electronic protocol template application, created a seven-day turn-around protocol review cycle time with most protocol reviews utilizing the Designated Member Review (DMR) process, and an IACUC office dedicated to helping investigators with the review process. Yet, we kept hearing..."The IACUC review process is slowing us down...its takes so long to get a protocol or amendment approved..." We decided to use metrics to tell the story. We developed an Excel spreadsheet to track all protocol activities including new submissions, amendments, annual reviews, de novo reviews, and protocol transfers. We tracked the amount of time the IACUC office held the protocol, the amount of time the IACUC conducted protocols reviews through either through Full Committee Review (FCR) or DMR, and the amount of time the investigator took to answer posted questions. The data was broken out into monthly average cycle times over a four-year period. The data showed the investigator was responsible for half of this review cycle time due to the IACUC waiting for response to posted questions. We average approximately 25 new protocols reviews each month. When we started the metrics, our average number of protocol review cycle days was 36. After implementing this program and sharing this data with investigators, we have experienced a steady yearly decline in cycle times. By monitoring the process and communicating possible gaps, we have reduced the cycle time by over 10 days to an average of 26 days in 2017. Now, we rarely receive investigator complaints regarding protocol review cycle times. In addition, the IACUC used the data to reduce our DMR process from seven days to three days. The results of this four-year effort helped us show how the IACUC can positively influence research, reduce cycle times, and support the investigators' needs. Even though the average number of days for review is still holding around 26, we can now demonstrate that the principal investigator controls up to half of the accountability for the review processes taking so long.
**Additional Information:**
This abstract demonstrates how we can collect data to help everyone involved with the IACUC process understand possible gaps in the program. By pulling data like this together, we can find ways to improve the protocol review process, improve communications with the investigators, and ultimately find synergies between the various individuals involved with these processes.