“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!

IACUC Oversight of the Worker Protection Program

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 in 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.

Tools for Oversight: Custom Reports

1. Cumulative Submissions Report: The first report is a comprehensive list of all the individuals who submitted a form (Figure 1). 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. 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 to the failure to complete the form by the appropriate deadline (within the month of their birthday).

2. Monthly Birthday Report: A second report was also created to target the submission status of an individual in regards to their birthday month (Figure 2). 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 (Figure 3). 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.

Tools for Oversight: Monthly Metrics

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.

- Number of HHQs submitted and reviewed during the preceding month
  - A breakdown of the following is provided: the number of initial submissions, annual follow ups, and summer student submissions, and the 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