Expanding Education for Increased Understanding: An In-depth Research Coordinator Training
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Problem: Our Institution has no single job description for the role of research coordinator. The responsibilities of serving as study liaison to the IRB may be included in any number of job titles: research coordinator, research assistant, or research nurse coordinator. The Institution also has fairly high staff turnover. Tight budgets mean there is rarely overlap between old and new employees. New employees are then left to find their own way through the IRB process. The IRB first addressed this educational need by developing an ongoing monthly training program that runs throughout the academic year and a consultation service for researchers and study personnel to meet with a regulatory analyst. While research staff have consistently reported these services are very valuable, each has its limitations. The monthly program design means staff hired mid-year miss the early sessions. The consultation session is generally not comprehensive.

Program: IRB staff developed an intensive day and half program for study coordinators. The curriculum includes the following: Background/History; Special Topics (e.g., training, vulnerable populations, conflict of interest, grant congruency); IRB Review of a New Application; Activities after Approval; Research Documentation; Developing a Consent Form; the Process of Informed Consent.

Resources: To ensure the session promoted interchange between IRB staff and participants, we limited registration to 30 people. While we envisioned the session as being most beneficial to newer employees, we advertised it widely. In response to our announcement, over 60 people registered. This was strong validation of our belief that the training filled a need. Feedback from the first session was extremely positive. While some experienced participants noted the session covered many topics they were familiar with, others said they found they learned from the session and were better able to understand the full context of IRB work. A second session was held for those people on the waiting list. To eliminate participants for whom the session would be less informative, we sent a copy of the program outline to everyone so that they could make the most informed decision about the value of attending. This was helpful. Those people attending the second session were well grounded in the expectation of the training. We will offer this session quarterly for employees who are relatively new to this role. The course is one that is adaptable to other institutions, and would also be beneficial to principal investigators who interact directly with the IRB.