Simple Method to Track IRB Metrics without an Electronic System
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**Background:** Tracking IRB turnaround times is critical to evaluate performance and direct quality improvement initiatives. Most electronic IRB systems include tracking and reporting of metrics as standard functionality. However, 60% of accredited institutions, per the Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs 2012 Metrics, do not have an “online system for IRB review functions” and are challenged with identifying a method to capture key metrics in real-time (volumes, types of submissions, approval times) without placing unnecessary burden on staff.

**Methods:** After trying various cumbersome and ineffective systems of capturing key data, in 2011, the use of pre-formulated, monthly Excel tracking sheets was implemented. Each submission is entered into the spreadsheet by the assigned IRB coordinator upon receipt and updated as it goes through the review process. At the end of each month: 1) studies not yet approved are carried over to the next month’s sheets; and 2) volumes and timelines are calculated. This data is entered into a yearly summary sheet with tabs for each coordinator and the office.

**Results:** This is a simple, but comprehensive method for tracking IRB metrics. In addition, IRB coordinators can easily view studies on their radar. Simply implementing this system has raised awareness of studies in “IRB limbo,” and resulted in an overall reduction in average time to approval by 26%. The metrics have also allowed staff to identify and evaluate three quality improvement initiatives. The new process has reduced the burden of tracking metrics on IRB staff. Leadership is provided with real-time and historical data to evaluate staffing and performance. This method was later adopted by the IACUC staff. There are many benefits to this method of collecting key information which allows: Tracking each step of the review and approval process; utilizing simple Excel formulas for timelines; calculating additionally valuable timeframes (time to Chair review, time to sending meeting review); creating a visual display; categorizing submissions and reviews by type; pinpointing delays to target process improvement; identifying and measuring the effectiveness of QI initiatives; and providing leadership with information to evaluate staff performance

**Conclusions:** In summary, IRBs must ensure adequate protection of human participants without causing unnecessary delays. Without an electronic IRB system, tracking metrics is possible without being a burden on staff by embracing programs such as Excel, and is an important tool that should be implemented.