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Professionalism – Doing the Right Thing in Everything We Do
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The way that we present ourselves in our interactions with patients is a reflection of our individual character, as well as an impression of the institution we represent.

Whether at a UT Health clinic, Memorial Hermann Hospital, one of Memorial Hermann’s clinics, or our Clinical Research Unit, patients coming into a clinical environment are already apprehensive and are most probably experiencing some level of anxiety. This is the main reason that it is our responsibility to present ourselves in a manner that will put them at ease and lessen, rather than increase, their trepidation.

So how can we accomplish this?

There are many ways in which we convey and uphold the standards and integrity of the healthcare profession. We make impressions with our appearance, our verbal communications, and even our body language.

Appearance includes our dress and personal hygiene. Whether you wear street clothes or scrubs, your apparel should be reflective of the professional setting of which you are a part. While there is nothing wrong with colorful scrubs, you need to remember that the clinic is not a costume party, and you should respect the elements of good taste. Provocative attire should be avoided. Jewelry, if worn, should be kept simple and should not in any way interfere with your ability to function (i.e., should not inhibit your movement or, in the worst case, cause any harm to a patient).

The way we speak to patients must be appropriate. Casual conversation is acceptable and may even assist in putting patients at ease. However, we must be careful to avoid inappropriate language, off-color jokes, and discussions involving religion or politics. It is important to understand that not everyone has the same sense of humor, and even simple joking may be misconstrued and taken as offensive. Additionally, intimating information to patients about other patients is never acceptable. Such breaches of confidentiality, besides being unprofessional, are against all medical ethics and could even result in legal action against you and/or the organization.

Body language is how we carry ourselves. This includes the gestures we make, as well as things like eating in front of patients and gum chewing (which would never be acceptable). Consider the following example: Julie is a study coordinator in a trial involving diabetic patients. While screening individuals for participation, she happens to also be eating a candy bar. At one stage, to make a point, she takes the candy from her mouth and points it at the patient. You don’t have to be in the medical profession to see that this behavior is wrong on so many levels.

(continued on page 2)
Whether patients are coming to us as trial volunteers or with serious existing medical conditions, they expect and deserve to experience a standard of professionalism in the delivery of their care, or in our case, in administering their study procedures. We all have a responsibility to do the right thing and act the proper way, in everything we do.

**Skit on Coordinator Professionalism Elicits Laughter and Inspires Introspection**

Attendees of October’s Coordinator Forum were treated to a skit on professionalism performed by members of UTHealth’s clinical research community. The presentation featured a single vignette performed in two different manners—one professional and the other gravelly unprofessional.

Josephine Turner (pictured) delivered a Broadway-ready performance in her parody of a clueless coordinator who has little regard for her patient, played by Nicole Fatheree (pictured to the right of Josephine).

In the second act, Laura Diekman and Joy Tomochek countered Josephine and Nicole by modeling a highly professional interaction between a sensitive coordinator and a research subject.

Shannon Winton, who wrote the skit, and Hayley Balkin provided commentary and led a discussion among the audience about what went wrong and what went right.

We will surely be more mindful of our behavior in the work environment, and let’s thank this group for sharing their gifts and experience on the stage!

**Congrats to Matt Galpin, Guangrong (Greg) Lu, and Mayank Rao on Earning CCRC Certification!**

Matt Galpin (Clinical Data Analyst and Research Coordinator in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery), Guangrong (Greg) Lu (Program Manager in the Department of Neurosurgery), and Mayank Rao (Senior Research Associate in the Department of Neurosurgery) have all passed the Academy of Clinical Research Professionals (ACRP) clinical research coordinator (CRC) certification exam in October of 2015. The CCRC credential formally recognizes coordinators who have met the professional standards set forth by the ACRP.

Matt had this to say of his experience: “I studied for the exam for 3 months but came to find out that experience was by far the most important factor in passing the exam. The questions are situational and not asking for definitions. Ultimately, I believe that if you have a well rounded background in research you will do just fine.”

Mayank added, “I started preparing for the test three weeks in advance, mostly on weekends. I think, more than studying, it’s experience that plays an important factor. I downloaded the ACRP app, which was helpful in giving me the gist of the types of questions that can be asked.”

The next CCRC certification exam is in March of 2016 with an application deadline of February 1, 2016. More information is found [here](#).
The Texas Regional CTSA Consortium and UT System Launch Clinical Trials Xpress

What is Clinical Trials Xpress (CTX)?
Envisioned by the Texas Regional CTSA Consortium (TRCC) with support from the highest levels of the UT System, Clinical Trials Xpress (CTX) provides a comprehensive, centralized infrastructure and dedicated staffing to accelerate the pace of multi-center clinical trials. CTX offers industry partners and physician investigators a single point of entry to access streamlined processes, harmonized operational procedures, and integrated informatics. Founding institutions include the five TRCC campuses with CTSA awards:

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<th>Institution Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>UT Health Science Center, Houston</td>
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<td>UT MD Anderson Cancer Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>UT Southwestern Medical Center, Dallas</td>
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<td>UT Medical Branch at Galveston</td>
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<td>UT Health Science Center, San Antonio</td>
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What is the CTX operating model?
The CTX operating model has been designed to limit the administrative burden and redundancies associated with traditional study start-up activities.

A Clinical Research Navigator at each campus will help shepherd the clinical trial start-up process and support the research investigators and study teams. The Navigator at UT Health is Stephanie Hulsey of the CRU.

Key elements of the operating model include:
- Adoption of the UT System IRB Reciprocity model and use of central IRBs – The UTHealth IRB was selected by the TRCC Executive Committee to serve as the Reviewing IRB for the network
- Use of pre-approved Master Clinical Trial Agreements with industry sponsors
- Common study budgets negotiated by CTX with input from each participating campus
- Robust, informatics-driven study feasibility (i2B2) to augment investigator feedback
- Collection and reporting of site and network performance metrics
- An e-Regulatory Binder that mirrors the paper and houses sponsor, site, and IRB critical documents.

Upcoming Certification Testing Dates

CCRP certification: For those interested in becoming a Certified Clinical Research Professional, the next exam in Houston is at Methodist Hospital on February 6, 2016 with a registration deadline of December 25, 2015. You can find more information here.

CCRC certification: The next exam dates for certification as a Clinical Research Coordinator (CRC) are in February and March of 2016. Applications are due by February 1, 2016, and you can find more information here.
Upcoming Training

Study Coordinator Monthly Forum
Objective: Discuss best practices in clinical research management and network with administrators and staff from various research groups within UTHealth. More information here.
Date: January 26, 2015 (Topic: ClinicalTrials.gov)
Time: 11:30 am – 1:00 pm
Location: MSB 2.135
Lunch provided for the first 40 participants.
Registration is not required.

Center for Clinical Investigation (CCI) Meeting
Objective: Aid clinical research and reduce the burden on individual teams by identifying best practices, streamlining clinical research management processes, and providing education, training, and support to clinical research staff.
Date: December 14, 2015
Time: 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Location: UTPB 1100.55
Registration is not required.

Clinical Research Finance Lunch and Learn
Objective: Provide staff members guidance on research financial topics (e.g., budgeting, billing, and coverage analysis). This forum is also intended to be a place to introduce or update any financial matters, as well as to be a learning environment where employees can bring their questions or concerns for discussion in an open setting with peers.
Date: December 9, 2015 (Topic: IRB fees)
Time: 11:30 am – 12:30pm
Location: MSB 2.135
Feel free to bring your lunch.
Registration is not required.

Grants 101
Objective: Provide an overview of the process of preparing and submitting a grant application from UTHealth. These sessions are open to anyone who would like to attend but are designed primarily for junior investigators who have not previously submitted proposals as a PI, as well as for administrative support staff who assist faculty members with grant preparation and submission. More information here.
Date: January 21 and 22, 2015
Time: 8:30 am – 12:00 pm
Location: Cooley Conference Center
Register here.

About the Clinical Trials Resource Center
It is the mission of the Clinical Trials Resource Center (CTRC) to provide a single portal of expertise and best practices for study teams in order to facilitate efficient, compliant, and ethical study conduct and management. The CTRC office is located at UCT 790. Please visit https://www.uth.edu/ctrc/ for more information.

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