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Project Title: TRAINING PRECEPTORS IN HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS: AUGMENTATION OF A SOUTHWESTERN PROGRAM WITH A MINORITY FOCUS

Description:

The primary expectation of this initiative is to develop, refine, and evaluate an annual program that would serve to increase the ethical acceptability of human investigation on the part of faculty, staff and medical students at our medical center.

We hypothesized that this could be done through four integrated processes: First, we would inventory the institution's existing expertise and programs relevant to our goals. Second, a multi-dimensional Research Ethics Course would be created and presented annually. This course would help develop a cadre of individuals who would serve as preceptors for the promotion of ethical research awareness among the various constituencies conducting basic and clinical research within the Health Sciences campus. Third, through focused surveys and inquiry, we would initiate intervention and outreach arms from the institutional hub to research venues in smaller communities within the state. Last, we wanted to establish an integrated evaluation process, which would include components of acute and extended monitoring of course content, implementation of program goals, participant response, and eventually, institutional change.

Our presentation will briefly review the relative progress achieved toward these goals during the inaugural year of implementation.

A practical early goal for our program was to first identify a nucleus of individuals with an interest in human research ethics. These individuals were asked to serve as facilitators, and were critically involved in developing the content for an integrated twelve-hour course on human research ethics. The course was presented in an interactive format consisting of six two-hour sessions occurring weekly. The invited participants in this course were comprised of individuals whose professional responsibilities included either direct senior investigator experience or oversight of human research in some capacity. Clarifying the semantics within the grant proposal, all invited attendees were considered to be students. At the conclusion of the course, they might then be considered to be preceptors.

The evaluation team conducted preliminary surveys to assess institutional awareness of research-related ethics prior to the start of our program. This information set will be annually revised. In addition survey instruments, questionnaires, and focused interviews were conducted to critically assess the strengths, weaknesses, and impact of the Research Ethics Course. Directors of the program reviewed the conclusions of the evaluation team and modifications of course content, format, and structure are being implemented before offering the course the second time. More specifically, the invited participant list will include individuals from minority research programs, individuals involved in informed consent instruction, and principal investigators from the Schools of Pharmacy, Nursing, and Occupational Health. Ongoing strategic planning is identifying opportunities for focused outreach by preceptors during the second half of year 2000.

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