Building a Robust and Scalable Strategy to Extend Research Initiatives to Regional Sites and Communities

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Background and Significance: Research is a fundamental way by which we can improve the lives of patients and communities by delivering innovative, evidence-based, and high-quality healthcare. Research initiatives must include representation from diverse patient populations so that the resulting novel diagnostics and therapeutics can be implemented in a way that meets their needs and improves outcomes, particularly for communities that face healthcare disparities and frequently underrepresented in clinical trials. We can only solve this problem once we engage with local patient and healthcare provider communities to understand the nature of the issues and develop strategies to combat this problem. However, like many other healthcare systems in our area and across the country, the Cleveland Clinic still needs a robust infrastructure to conduct research across its regional sites and diverse patient communities. Thus, it is critical to identify barriers that interfere with conducting research in the region and effective strategies to overcome them.

Project Goal and Objective: Our goal is to support clinical and translational research initiatives among diverse patient communities in a flexible, scalable, and locally adaptable way. As a significant step to achieve that goal, this project aims to develop a strategy to expand research to the regional sites of the Cleveland Clinic, with an approach that other healthcare organizations can use to support their organizational research vision.

Methods: Our approach includes conducting: *(a)* A structured literature review (SLR) using major academic search engines to identify pertinent literature regarding national needs and barriers to conducting clinical and translational research. *(b)* An institutional and local needs assessment through a series of interviews with leaders and stakeholders across the health system to identify needs and goals with respect to research. *(c)* Data summation and model generation using content analysis as an analytic approach to summarize findings and, combined with data from the SRL, generate a scalable strategic model (including action steps, metrics, and milestones) to support regional research growth. *(d)* Report out and feedback discussions with key stakeholders to ensure alignment with institutional and community needs, with modifications made to the model as needed. *(e)* Implementation of the model at major regional hospital sites in the healthcare system.

Results: Data from stakeholder interviews and the SLR indicate the need for a multi-pronged and individualized approach to initiating and growing research at regional sites. This entails the implementation of a Sliding Scale Model resources to build and support a research infrastructure depend upon a key set of factors at each site. Model implementation will be guided by data from a series of measures that quantifies factors at each location and represents an equitable rollout process across the healthcare system.

Conclusion and Potential Impact: This project will enable the Cleveland Clinic to expand research across its regional sites. In doing so, it will also produce valuable information and insight into how other healthcare systems can expand their research infrastructure to community settings where they may engage diverse populations in rigorous, high-impact research to innovate healthcare delivery.