

POSTER ABSTRACTS

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Cancer 50

Collaborative Cancer Research Across Multiple HMOs: the Cancer Research Network

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Background. The Cancer Research Network was established in 1999 as a consortium of 10 HMOs funded to conduct collaborative research in cancer prevention and control.

Methods. The Cancer Research Network (CRN) is funded through a cooperative agreement by the National Cancer Institute (NCI). Leadership and policy development are provided through a Steering Committee and other advisory committees dealing with publications, communications, and new proposals. A key component of the CRN is its annual self-assessment of progress and productivity, using a participant evaluation survey. As part of the CRN Renewal, a new Scientific and Data Resources Core will implement data standardization initiatives and optimize data collection by applying methodologic learnings and operational efficiencies identified in the initial CRN projects. The portfolio of CRN's current and planned projects address issues spanning the spectrum of cancer control, from primary prevention to end-of-life care.

Results. The CRN made substantial progress toward its initial five aims, including: (1) establishing several projects around a theme of improving the effectiveness of cancer control interventions by examining patient, provider, and system-level factors that impact quality cancer care; (2) increasing involvement of cancer research investigators at the participating sites in NCI-sponsored research; (3) identifying strategies to increase enrollment in cancer clinical trials; and (4) improving the CRN's performance through periodic evaluation. Progress toward the specific aim of developing standardized approaches to data acquisition and management is a major emphasis of the CRN Renewal, and will include the development of conceptual and operational definitions of key cancer- and patient-related variables, along with construction of a Virtual Data Warehouse.

Discussion. The advantages and disadvantages to consortium research are manifold. Suggestions for the development, execution and management of multi-site population laboratories are proffered for further consideration.