Career Path of a Clinical Research Associate

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Symposium Objectives

1. Define various career development paths within the clinical research field
2. Describe how to develop effective training programs
3. Identify the most important skills to improve on your a) ability to interview or be interviewed, b) present or engage in public speaking and c) resume writing
Background

- BSN
- RN experience
- Beginning Research Career
- Graduate Education
- ACNP experience
Research kept pulling me back

- Never able to transition away from “helping” in the research office completely
- My transition to industry and becoming a CRA
First industry experience

- Using connections to break into industry
- Hired into a smaller start up
  - CRA vs. PM role
  - Greater variation in tasks as opposed to a traditional CRA role. Acted more as a PM (Budgets, CRF creation, Protocol writing, creating training materials, several contractors reporting in to my position)
Transition to parent company

- Smaller start up was fully integrated into parent company
- Returning from leave to a very different role
  - Changed from more of a PM role to a traditional CRA
  - Concern that would be seen as a step back/or too easy – (boy was I wrong!)
  - Quickly transitioned from monitoring 1-2 protocols at 4 or 5 sites, to 13 protocols at 28 sites.
  - Required a great deal of organizational skills and time management
Lead CRA role

- Eventually took on Lead CRA role for a 5000 subject trial.
  - Was able to use many skills that I learned when I first joined smaller start up company
  - Protocol development, CRF creation, budgets and contracts were once again part of my daily routine
  - Learned more about corrective action process and remediation
  - Developed responsibility for tracking statistics and trends across sites
Time for a break

- Decided to take some time off when my youngest was born. (Didn’t last long)
- Called to help out with a company start up
  - Was referred to this person by CRCs I had worked with at one of my sites
- Did some early work on a very part time basis
  - Assisted in SOP creation
  - Helped with one of their first accounts as a point person and auditor
  - Through this role was offered two full time jobs that I turned down
Back into Industry (again)

- Due to personal circumstances, I needed to find a full time job
- Applied for multiple positions, but none were a good fit (and some did not respond at all)
- Once again, called by a friend that was with a new company looking for CRAs
- Interviewed and was offered two different roles, one full time and one contract
Current day

- After one year of monitoring, transitioned to a full time position
- 3 months later became Lead CRA on a new study
- Once again working on protocol development, CRF creation, budgets/contract, etc.
Research – my “Why”

- Research teaches time and time again that it is okay to make mistakes.
  - You own your mistakes and correct them
  - You help your investigators and sites to do the same
- Research is black and white
  - There is very little room for a gray area. Rules are set by the FDA and we follow them and help our sites to follow them as well
- Innovation keeps things exciting
  - Always fun to work on the next new idea that could help treat an illness or disease
  - Also, fun to see things that you may have worked on early trials for that are now part of everyday medical practice
Tips

- Connections, Connections, Connections
  - You will meet so many people in this industry and you never know where your next opportunity will come from.
  - Every job I have held I have found through a personal referral

- It’s a small, small world
  - Research is an extremely small industry. Maintain professional standards and ethics at all times.

- The old becomes new again
  - As you move to different roles in research, you will have opportunities to pursue different areas of expertise, it is smart to build a repertoire of tasks in which you can excel.
Becoming a CRA

- Some of the qualities that you must have to be a CRA
  - Professional
  - Organized
  - Strong ethical foundation
  - Strong personality (you may need to take a stand to enforce what is right)
  - Good clinical background (helpful to have a degree in life sciences)
  - Excellent teamwork and communication skills
Where to start

- In this industry, experience is a strong point
  - May have to volunteer to gain some early experience
  - Have a CV and linked in profile that highlights your research skills and experience
- Use professional connections when you can
  - Make connections with other professionals in the research arena, make sure they know you are looking for a position and ask everyone to keep you in mind
- Look for companies that have a CRA training program
  - Many CROs have training programs so that you can gain experience.
  - Once you have some experience, it opens many doors to different roles
- Be willing to try something new
  - A new therapeutic area
Thank you!