The Cleveland Clinical and Translational Science Collaborative (CTSC): Role of the Research Concierge and the CTSC Request Management System

Background
The Clinical and Translational Science Collaborative (CTSC) in Cleveland consists of four primary partners: Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland Clinic, MetroHealth Medical Center and University Hospitals. One of the goals of the Clinical and Translational Science Collaborative (CTSC) is to transform the patchwork of existing resources into an integrated support network for clinical and translational research. Such a network will give researchers assistance with access to design and analysis expertise, bioethics and regulatory support and advice, and advanced methodologies and technologies. Examples of the latter include bioinformatics, proteomics, genomics, gene array analysis, metabolomics, FACS analysis, and other investigator-specific support.

Who Holds the Key to the Front Door?
The research concierge is the entry point for facilitating access to all CTSC resources. Responsibilities of the research concierge include:
- Streamlining the process of obtaining regulatory advice and technological consultation
- Identifying institutional resources for research project support
- Assisting inexperienced research investigators in navigating complex processes
- Identifying the potential use of CTSC cores to appropriately triage research projects
- Tracking requests and reporting the following to CTSC leadership: Summaries of core resource usage, utilization trends, and requests for non-CTSC related support

It didn’t take long to discover that an electronic system was a MUST!

And the Hunt Began…
Various electronic systems were identified and reviewed by our Biomedical Research Information Management (BRIM) Core but none of them provided a quick off-the-shelf solution. Ultimately, there were no existing systems that fit our needs in June 2008, so we faced a developmental crossroad. Should we buy an existing implementation knowing that significant customization would be needed, initiate full-scale in-house development, or consider outsourcing?

In the midst of this discussion, another option was identified. One of our cores uses a system to manage its day-to-day operations. The system maintains a repository of research projects and handles related aspects such as instrument scheduling, workflow, and invoicing. Its highly modifiable architecture allows the core to function independently from a large group of IT personnel, ultimately leading to cost and time savings. We were able to evaluate the system after seeing a live demo.

After comparing each option, the decision was made to adopt the existing in-house system as an initial building block for the development of the CTSC Request Management System (RMS). The timeline describes the progress of the system’s development.

How to access?
https://casemed.case.edu/ctsc/investigators/tools.cfm

CTSC RMS Overview
The RMS is based on a highly modified derivative of the Multi-Modality Multi-resource Informatics Infrastructure (MIMI) framework. The system provides a single entry point for collaboration within the CTSC. The RMS guides researchers in issuing and tracking their requests to the CTSC’s Cores. An investigator uses the system to request expertise via consultation resources. The system also allows core personnel to better manage incoming requests. Core administrators have the capability to forward requests to other cores or assign tasks from requests to consultation resource experts who then can consult with investigators to help address their research needs. The administrators can also note any changes or the current status of a request in a description box that is viewable to the requester. Consultation resource experts can access the system to update or complete any tasks that they have been assigned.

The web-based CTSC RMS is also designed to support the daily operations of the Research Concierge in such a way that maximizes operational efficiency through cooperative, decentralized management of consultation resources. The Research Concierge remains in the loop in an administrative capacity or as a recipient of a request and can oversee existing requests and make sure that they have been triaged to the appropriate cores.

Reaping the Benefits of the CTSC RMS
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A Sample of Next Steps
- Automate data input from external systems to reduce data entry redundancy
- Improve feedback and introduce enhancements (e.g., updated reporting)
- Evaluate and improve tools and resources

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