Where Does the Time Go?
An Analysis of Task Distribution in a Centralized Research Support Unit
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1| Introduction
- The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Translational and Clinical Sciences Institute (NC TraCS) established a centralized research coordination and management unit (RCMU) in 2018.
- RCMU provides part-time, temporary research coordination support to investigators and study teams.
- Centralized research coordination support units have been increasingly adopted by academic medical centers but the reasons for their success or failure are not well understood.

2| Aim
- To determine the primary type of service (tasks) needed from a centralized research coordination support unit in a large academic medical center.

3| Methods
- Coordination support tasks were grouped into categories:
  1) start-up/regulatory/administrative
  2) subject recruitment
  3) protocol execution
  4) data management
- Data was sourced from real time web-based time-tracking software used for RCMU study billing.
- Coordinator effort across a one-year period (6/1/18-5/31/19) was analyzed*.

Fig. 1: Description of Studies

Fig. 2: Proportion of Total Hours by Task

Fig. 3: Proportion of Total Hours Spent on Administrative Tasks

Fig. 4: Distribution of Hours Tracked per task & study

*6 of 38 studies that received less than one month of support during the year were excluded from analysis.

4| Results
- RCMU coordinators clocked a total of 1747.3 hours for 32 research studies in a one year period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Category</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Studies</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>start-up/regulatory/administrative</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subject recruitment</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protocol execution</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>data management</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Coordinators clocked a median of 17.6 hours per week devoted to start-up/regulatory/administrative tasks.

5| Conclusions
- Subject recruitment, protocol execution, and data management duties are overall easily measurable and trackable (via recruitment logs, study visits, case report forms, etc.), but the majority of time in the RCMU was spent managing start-up, regulatory, and administrative tasks that are less concrete and observable.

Research coordinators could benefit from receiving more robust training related to start-up/regulatory/administrative tasks.
Worktime needed to manage these tasks should be accounted for in study budgets and allocating coordinator effort.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studies</th>
<th>Data Management</th>
<th>Subject Recruitment</th>
<th>Protocol Execution</th>
<th>Start-up/Regulatory/Administrative</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>n=6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures:
- Fig. 1: Description of Studies
- Fig. 2: Proportion of Total Hours by Task
- Fig. 3: Proportion of Total Hours Spent on Administrative Tasks
- Fig. 4: Distribution of Hours Tracked per task & study

Wider columns indicate more hours clocked.

Fig. 4: Each column represents one study. The width of each column is a function of total hours clocked for that study.