Implementation of VIVO at Ponce School of Medicine

Challenges of a Small School Setting

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Abstract

This poster will provide an overview of the Ponce School of Medicine with an emphasis on the communities most affected by VIVO. It will cover the implementation of VIVO considering issues that we anticipated from the outset as well as unexpected challenges that we have addressed during the first year of implementation. We will also highlight the institutional and personnel resources that have been critical to early adoption, testing and implementation of VIVO.

The Ponce School of Medicine – Brief Background and History

The Ponce School of Medicine (PSM) is a free standing medical school in southern Puerto Rico with ~600 students across four professional programs. The School of Medicine was established and filled its first class in 1977. Within several years, the institution established research programs funded by NIGMS and NCRR. This led the way to initiation of a Biomedical Sciences PhD Program in 1988. These two programs were joined in 1999 by a Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program and then a Masters Program in Public Health in 2002. To date, PSM has trained and graduated nearly 1,500 bilingual (English/Spanish) physicians, who are working throughout Puerto Rico and the continental US. Scores of healthcare professionals and research scientists, nearly all of whom are Hispanic, have been trained and likewise are working throughout the country and contributing to the US healthcare, education, and biomedical research communities.

Across the four programs, PSM holds a faculty of 300 members. Nearly 1/3 of all PSM faculty are involved in research generating ~$8 million/year in total extramural funding. This includes major support from NCRR, which has been essential to research programs at PSM.

Anticipated Impact of VIVO at PSM

VIVO participation is expected to provide a strong contribution to the ongoing research by established laboratories at PSM as well as to expand research by promoting the development of our junior faculty in their research careers. Participation in the national network is of particular importance for the Ponce School of Medicine due to our geographical distance from major US university centers. In addition, regional physicians from southern and western Puerto Rico are limited in participating in research due to infrequent physical interaction with the on-site PSM research community. PSM can serve as an institutional access point, including via VIVO membership, for these practitioners to interact with the local and national research community. This will enhance clinical research in our institution and provide increased access to unique samples from underrepresented populations more broadly throughout the VIVO national network.

Current Challenges

- Keeping up with the pace of the national project
- Making VIVO work for PSM

Participation in the ontology group has been a benefit to help frame the current version of VIVO to fit our institutional organization. In addition, getting technical support and helping to steer development of documentation should help to make the road smoother for future data input into the program.

Future Challenges

- Expansion of outreach efforts to the entire faculty body
- Defining long term needs to maintain VIVO at PSM

Institutional resources will need to be identified and allocated for keeping VIVO at PSM up to date and growing as research needs grow.

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