Clinical Research Nurses Roles and challenges

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Today the health care system in the world continues to undergo rapid change. This last decade has seen major developments in research, which have changed completely the landscape of clinical research; what were phenomena becomes reality. The result of these collective changes has been that research has now become a frontline, core service of the national health services. Inherent within these changes has been the role of the research nurse.

This paper was commissioned to examine the growing clinical research nursing practice, the roles of CRN and challenges.

According to the IACRN, clinical research nursing is the specialized practice of professional nursing focused on maintaining equilibrium between care of the research participants and fidelity of research protocol.

Another definition; Clinical Research Nurse (CRN) refers to any nurse who is employed principally to undertake research within the clinical environment. This can include a variety of nursing roles but they all Share the common feature that research is a central part of their employment.

The vision of the IACRN is enhancing clinical research quality and safety through specialized nursing practice, that’s the reason why one of the principal pushes in the nursing field, is to encourage research as a career track.

Clinical research is a new and emerging discipline for nurses, which means that clarity on the role and responsibilities expected for nurses working in this discipline, and at different bands, needs to be provided.

In 2007 the national institute of health clinical center (NIHCC) released the result of a role delineation project; Building foundation for clinical research nursing domain of practice for the CRN, this project defined the scope of the clinical research nursing specialty practice in the context of two nursing roles:

1-Clinical research nurses (CRN), clinical staff nursing with a control focus on care of research participants.
2-Research nurse coordinators (RNC).

This helped summarizing the five dimensions –distinct categories of activities- as following:
- Clinical practice dimension.
- Study management dimension.
- Care coordination and continuity dimension.
- Human subjects protection dimension.
- Contributing to the science dimension.

These categories highlight the value of CRN as a coordinator, communicator, manager, consultant, educator, administrator, leader, decision maker, observer, .et.
With other roles and responsibilities due to knowledge and development of research, like:

- Contributes to the development of research protocols.
- Provides comprehensive advice and guidance on matters relating to research ethics and governance.
- Act as a resource to staff and contributes to the professional and educational development of staff.
- Leads on the development and updating of local policies and procedures.
- Leads on the professional and educational development of staff.
- Recognizes the importance of acknowledging the historical context with in which clinical research is undertaken.

In today’s NHS, the scope and opportunities available for nurses in clinical research, are exciting and Varied; although myths and misconceptions remain and as any other practice there are challenges slows the process of development and make it harder. Attempts to fight this challenges have been met with varying levels of success, because no matter what is it we have to deal with it if we consider moving toward a wider clinical research nurses professional community.

**Some of these challenges are:**

- Lack of confidence.
- Role conflict as a research and nurse.
- The challenges of gaining cooperation of clinical nursing staff to comply with trials protocols.
- Difficulties maintaining their own motivation.
- Challenges associated with training and management of CRN which are usually associated with trial recruitment and data collection.
- Lack of nurse mentors with a career commitment to clinical research in academic and clinical institutions.
- Nurses interested in research who work in low-intensity research environments without adequate mentors or role models feel isolated and without the necessary support to begin a clinical research career.
- Students enter academic nursing programs to prepare themselves as clinicians, not researchers. Students and future clinical researchers often are not aware of the possibility of becoming clinical researchers.
- Have incorrect assumptions about research, or believe that research would simply not be a good career match for them; students.

**In closing it is recommended that:**
we attempt to create a sustainable financial support for CRN.
establish evidence base for practice.
-Determine the scope and standards of practice.
-Create a strategic plan to support the development of professional CRN.
-Increase awareness among nurses about the importance of scientific research
Equip students in nursing colleges with basic research knowledge and experience, -
which improves their confidence when they graduate and engage in work
Provide moral and material support for research and the establishment of contests -
and incentive awards to researchers
Reduce the workload on clinical staff nurses, clinical research nurses and -
practitioners in the health sector to give them enough time to focus on their research
-Creation of research-intensive environments that foster the development of students
and attract nurses into research.

And we need to consider if we are to beat the problems to encourage professionals
working in clinical research to collectively support each other.

Reference: