



HURON RESEARCH SUITE USER GROUP IDENTIFIES KEY BUSINESS ISSUES FACING RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

CONFIRMING THE VALUE OF TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS IN RESEARCH BUSINESS PROCESSES

For the past nine years business users of Huron Research Suite software have gathered annually to share best practices in research administration, compliance and clinical trials. At each of the last two meetings, over 100 attendees from more than 30 institutions discussed the challenges facing them in the business of research.

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DEBRA THURLEY

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR,
CONFLICT OF INTEREST PROGRAM,
PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

SEVERAL ONGOING THEMES EMERGED FROM THE TWO MOST RECENT CONFERENCES:

1. INCREASED REGULATORY PRESSURES ARE FORCING INSTITUTIONS TO STRENGTHEN CONFLICT OF INTEREST OVERSIGHT.

With new National Institutes of Health (NIH) rules governing financial conflicts of interest (FCOI) going into effect in August 2012, institutions are continuing to look for ways to boost conflicts of interest (COI) compliance while addressing new challenges ranging from public disclosure to FCOI training. A growing number of research organizations are finding that a centralized software solution not only

provides an easy-to-use, single point of entry for creating and managing financial disclosures but also promotes compliance by simplifying and accelerating all the processes associated with both annual and study specific disclosures. For example, Pennsylvania State University reported that approximately 99 percent of its users submitted disclosures on time since implementing an electronic COI solution. Penn State also outlined how the institution implemented FCOI training directly within its electronic disclosure system to meet the new FCOI rules.

2. ENSURING ACCURATE PATIENT AND SPONSOR BILLING IS A PRIMARY BUSINESS CHALLENGE FOR RESEARCH ORGANIZATIONS UNDERTAKING CLINICAL TRIALS.

In a webinar with more than 250 attendees, 60 percent of poll respondents identified accurate patient and sponsor billing as their major challenge in managing clinical trials. Ensuring that sponsors are billed for trial-related procedures, and that Medicare or other patient insurance is billed for routine patient care, actually poses a dual challenge: proper billing to minimize unbilled procedures while facing the threat of severe penalties if it is done wrong. The University of Utah described how it leverages the Huron Research Suite clinical trials management system (CTMS) to improve billing accuracy using a distributed departmental approach for Medicare Coverage Analysis (MCA). Several other institutions highlighted a centralized approach to achieving the same goal. A Utah attendee also described how they are using the CTMS to maximize research revenue through better management of budgeting, payment terms and invoicing.

3. PROCESS SIMPLIFICATION IN HUMAN STUDIES OVERSIGHT IS A GROWING TREND.

Finding ways to reduce process complexity while ensuring high-quality and consistent oversight is a challenge to any organization with a growing

volume of research. The University of Maryland, Baltimore, highlighted the importance of having flexible Institutional Review Board (IRB) software in order to enable process improvements such as those included in the Huron HRPP Toolkit. As a result, the institution cut some of its turnaround times by more than 50 percent. The University of Southern California presented compelling examples of how its configurable electronic IRB process enabled it to simplify its traditional forms to decrease confusion and increase compliance. Both the University of South Florida (USF) and the University of Utah described how electronic meeting management has dramatically improved meeting planning, conduct and tracking of outcomes while strengthening the bottom line. USF, for example, outlined significant savings both in paper costs (purchasing, printing and shredding) and in staff time.

4. PROCESS AUTOMATION BEYOND PROPOSAL SUBMISSION IS A PRIORITY IN GRANTS ADMINISTRATION.

While accurate electronic submission of grant proposals will always be a primary goal at institutions with electronic systems, those institutions are also exploring the ways that technology now facilitates managing related processes such as proposal development, proposal tracking and integration with third-party systems. Huron's Grants Advisory Group — comprising representatives from a number of Huron Research Suite users — works to ensure continuous improvements in online budgeting, centralized award management and other process automation benefits beyond system-to-system submission. The group presented a variety of approaches to online budgeting, simplified by budget grids designed to eliminate spreadsheets and ensure crossdepartment budgeting consistency. Individual presentations by the University of Michigan and the University of Chicago outlined the importance of managing post-award modifications — that is, changes made to an awarded project — and current efforts at each university to capture these changes.

5. RESEARCH BUSINESS SYSTEMS SHOULD BE INTEGRATED WITH OTHER BUSINESS SYSTEMS AND DATABASES.

While automation can enable integration of one research business process (e.g., grants administration) with related research business processes (e.g., those of the IRB), attendees stressed the need to facilitate integration with non-research business systems. For example, the Medical College of Wisconsin detailed its successful integration of its Huron Research Suite software with other institutional applications such as Oracle's PeopleSoft HR and financial systems, while the University of Utah delved into the successful integration of its Research Suite CTMS software with its billing software. In each instance, the result was to ensure accurate data flow from one system into the other for both upstream and downstream processes. Special breakout sessions focused on how best to share common data across applications and how to choose the best way to distribute data stored in different systems

The annual user meeting was initiated in the belief that personal interaction would lead to enriched relationships and a deeper understanding of the business issues impacting the research institutions.

"This annual gathering of Huron Research Suite software users has become an invaluable forum to me for identifying and evaluating the critical automation opportunities in research administration," said Debra Thurley, assistant director, conflict of interest program, Pennsylvania State University. "In addition to the knowledge imparted in the presentations, discussions and interactive workgroup sessions, the value of the networking among Huron Research Suite users cannot be overstated. A lot of what is learned happens in conversations that go on behind the scenes, helping to make the yearly meeting an event I always look forward to."

"What started as a basic user group has evolved into a forum for addressing key issues facing the entire industry," said Nick Stier, managing director, Huron. "What we and our customers learn from each other not only leads to continuous improvement in both product development and product implementation, but also provides fresh insights that can benefit all research organizations. This collaborative approach ensures that all of us stay fixed on the ultimate goal: streamlining the business of research so that researchers can stay focused on producing results."

ABOUT HURON RESEARCH SUITE USER GROUPS

All Huron Research Suite software customers have the opportunity to join the User Group, an association of representatives from leading research organizations in North America who share best practices and promote product innovation and advancement through a user forum website, a yearly business user conference and an annual developer forum. The annual meetings give Huron Research Suite users the opportunity to network and share experiences, best practices and technical tips; test new concepts on knowledgeable peers; gain insights into e-research use and development; and provide input on the Huron Research Suite product roadmap.

ABOUT HURON RESEARCH SUITE

The Huron Research Suite software has been developed to meet the needs of leading academic medical centers and research institutions throughout North America. Huron Research Suite solutions are deployed by consulting experts from Huron working in conjunction with local client teams. Configurable applications for grants administration, research compliance and clinical trials efficiently manage the business of research by combining information technology with industry best practices. Huron's professionals have worked with more than 90 of the top 100 research universities in the U.S. More information can be found at <https://www.huronconsultinggroup.com/expertise/technology/click-portal-solutions>.



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