Audit Findings in Clinical Trials: Avoiding the Pitfalls

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Top Clinical Trial Audit Finding Areas

- Informed Consent Process & Documentation
- Accurate and Complete Study Records
- Determination and Documentation that Eligibility Criteria are Satisfied
- Adverse Event Review and Reporting
- Drug/Device Accountability
- Protocol Adherence
- Poor Regulatory Site Documentation
- Failure to Address Monitor Findings
- Sponsor-Investigator Trials
Informed Consent Process and Documentation

• Incorrect consent version
• No source documentation of consent process and fact that subject was provided a copy of consent
• Consent not dated by subject
• Check boxes left blank; pages not initialed by subject
• No HIPAA Authorization
• Original consent missing
• Not re-consented when required
  – Long lag time between signed consent and start of participation
Solutions

• Include a note regarding consent process -- how it was conducted; whether questions were asked/answered; fact that signed copy was provided
• Before starting consent process, check to make sure you have latest approved version from IRB
• NEVER fill out consents in advance
• REMEMBER – Informed Consents aren’t the same as HIPAA Authorizations
• Watch your times – Goldilocks Rule
  – Not too much, not too little – Just Right!
Accurate and Complete Study Records

- Discrepancies between CRFs and medical records/source documents
- Incomplete CRFs
- No documentation of PI review of CRFs
- Improper Error Correction
  – NO WHITE OUT; NO PENCIL
Solutions

• Read the protocol and CRF forms carefully before starting the study to make sure:
  – CRF captures necessary study data
  – Source document captures necessary study data
• Set up a regular research team meeting time to review study data
• Avoid Messy CRF Build-Up
  – Complete forms in real time – not just before the next monitoring visit
Determination and Documentation that Eligibility Criteria are Satisfied

- Eligibility checklists incomplete
- No source documentation confirming eligibility criteria
- Failure to conduct all tests needed to satisfy eligibility criteria
- No documentation that PI has reviewed and signed eligibility checklist
- No documentation of sponsor waiver of eligibility requirement or waiver by PI when protocol specifically states that no waivers are allowed
Solutions

• Set up a process for PI review/signature of eligibility checklist
• Document any waivers from sponsor
• REMEMBER – don’t confuse treatment with research
  – Protocol may call for tests within a certain window for eligibility determination even though in a treatment context those tests might not be required
Adverse Event Review and Reporting

• Conflict between CRFs and source documentation, e.g., AE noted in medical record but not on CRF, or vice versa
• AEs not signed/graded/attributed in a timely manner
• Failure to follow reporting requirements
Solutions

- Evaluate AEs in real time
- Review the reporting requirements
  - IRB Policy & Procedure 64 – Investigator Reporting Obligations to IRB
  - Clinical Trial Agreement
Drug/Device Accountability

- No documentation that oral drug was provided to subject and/or returned by subject with pill count
- Poor documentation regarding drug diaries
- Poor prescription practices
Solutions

• Document reminders to subjects to complete pill diaries and return diaries/drug
  – Phone call before visit and after visit
  – Letter seeking return of drug

• Improve script practices
  – Make sure all are signed by physician
  – Print name and phone number under signature
  – Provide IDS with list of authorized prescribers and their signatures
Protocol Adherence

• Changes made in protocol without first obtaining IRB approval for reasons other than immediate patient safety

• No documentation of reason for missed tests, schedule changes, etc.
Solutions

• Read protocol BEFORE starting the trial to make sure it is realistic and to identify differences between what protocol requires and what would typically be done in a treatment situation
• Don’t confuse treatment and research
• If a protocol deviation occurs more than once, determine if protocol modification is appropriate
• Document deviations and be aware of reporting requirements
Poor Regulatory Site Documentation

• No delegation of duties log
• No up-to-date folder with CVs, licensing info, etc.
• No SOPs
• Missing records and poor record storage
Solutions

• Start every study with a delegation of duties log and review with all study team members

• Look at your Clinical Trial Agreement for record retention requirements
  – Remember to negotiate for funds to cover document maintenance costs
Failure to Address Monitor Findings

• Ignore sticky notes at your peril.

• Solution: Don’t let it wait – set rigid timetable for addressing all monitor findings and documenting how they were addressed

– REMEMBER – If it’s not in writing, it didn’t happen
Sponsor-Investigator Trials

• Investigator must meet BOTH Investigator and Sponsor Responsibilities

• Watch out for multi-site trials

• Solution – ASK YOURSELF:
  – Can I do this?
  – Do I have the resources to do this?
  – Do I want to take on this responsibility?
Re-Sponsorbilities Checklist

- IND
- Annual Reports
- Protocol Amendments
- PI Selection & Obtaining:
  - CV, 1572, financial disclosure
- Investigator Brochure
- Monitoring Trial
  - Selection of Monitor
  - Documented transfer of any obligations to be carried out by CRO

- Safety reports on AEs/risks to all investigators and FDA
- Ensure FDA compliance by all investigators
- Evaluate safety and effectiveness data
- Drug accountability records
- Labeling
Bonus Feature: New HITECH HIPAA Rules on Breach Notification

- Effective Sept. 23, 2009
- Covers “Unsecured PHI”
- Breach Notification is required if the unauthorized disclosure, use, acquisition or access compromises the security or privacy of the protected health information by posing a significant risk of financial, reputational or other harm to the individual
  - Notice by Mail - Always
  - Notice in broadcast media - Sometimes
- Encryption is the key!
Questions?

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