

Inclusion and Integration of Community and Patient Perspectives in Review of Pilot Grant Applications

The recent funding opportunity announcement for the Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSAs) emphasizes the importance of engaging patients and communities as active partners in the full spectrum of translational research. This is a challenge in earlier phases of translational research, such as pre-clinical and clinical studies (i.e. T1-T2). Since 2008, the Michigan Institute for Clinical & Health Research (MICHR), a CTSA-funded institution, has engaged community partners in the review of pilot grant applications. However, involvement of community partners was often limited to later phase translational research. Recently, the MICHR Community Engagement and Pilot Grant Programs developed new strategies to 1) integrate community and patient perspectives in review of earlier phase translational research, 2) enhance training and education for community and patient reviewers, and 3) evaluate specific aspects of the review process. Community and patient partners now serve as members of MICHR's Scientific Review Committee (SRC) and review T1-T4 translational research alongside scientific reviewers. To educate about the review process and evaluation of applications, reviewers receive a specialized blended learning experience via webinar training, mock reviewing real pilot grant applications, and observing a study section in action. A post-review survey and phone debrief is used to assess aspects of their participation (e.g. understanding of the review criteria, perceived group dynamics at study section, etc.) and areas for training improvement. This presentation will describe the strategies, evaluation findings, and lessons learned from recent funding rounds, and future efforts to involve patients and communities in research activities that span the translational spectrum.

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