


CPCI

Consortium for Pediatric Cellular Immunotherapy

Meeting
Academic
Cell
Therapy
Workforce
Challenges
Retention & Engagement

March 2022



The Consortium for Pediatric Cellular Immunotherapy (CPCI) has recognized ongoing challenges across its academic sites related to retention and engagement of specialized cell therapy staff. These challenges are a result of the explosive growth of the field, which has increased competition from the biotech sector. To ensure business continuity in the cell therapy environment, the cGMP Working Group within the Consortium has focused on this issue and believes that it is critical for such facilities to develop affirmative strategies around recruiting and retention of talent.

Continue reading for strategic approaches to promoting team engagement and retention

1

Engage team members in the mission

Providing opportunities for team members to engage with clinical team members and research subjects can connect manufacturing work with the clinical impact of cell therapy research. For some cell therapy team members, such as medical technologists, clinical contact may be part of the standard work of their role, however this may not be the case for traditional GMP production or quality roles. Participating in patient dose preparation, delivery or receipt of cell product to clinic can be a rewarding and engaging experience for cell therapy teams. Community outreach in the context of facilitating facility tours for patients, donors, or other community groups can also provide a meaningful experience, allowing team members to engage with others outside the lab and connect their work to the overall institutional mission.

2

Empower team members to participate in process improvement activities

Traditionally, there may be limited opportunities for medical technologists or GMP professionals to work on projects outside of the regimented daily standard work in their specific area. Engaging team members in assay development, process development, or other process improvement ideas allows those individuals an opportunity to innovate and “work their scientific muscles.” In laboratory teams where process development and assay development opportunities do not exist, promoting engagement of the team members in workflow optimization and standard work process improvements is an alternative.

3

Develop Subject Matter Experts

Providing opportunities for elevated responsibility in the form of subject matter experts (SMEs) for specific methods, equipment or processes engages team members recognizes and challenges high performing staff. Designating staff as specialized trainers, project owners, or equipment super-users not only has a positive impact on those delegated to these elevated roles but can promote team engagement and empower the team to participate toward a common goal. Providing opportunities for staff to attend seminars or scientific meetings with the added responsibility of bringing knowledge back to the greater team is another example of designating special responsibility to individuals and promoting professional growth within the team.

4

Provide professional pathways for growth

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