

IBC Quality Improvement

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The University of New Mexico (UNM) BioHazard Compliance (BHC) office in the Health Science Center (HSC) Office of Research (OR) has tested a quality improvement initiative that might be valuable to other institutions that have an Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC). In conjunction with other OR compliance units, we have implemented a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) program based on the scientific method (Nolte et al., 2008) and designed to improve administrative processes. An area that needed improvement was our ability to concisely translate IBC protocol review contingencies into formalized written response letters to investigators in an expeditious manner.

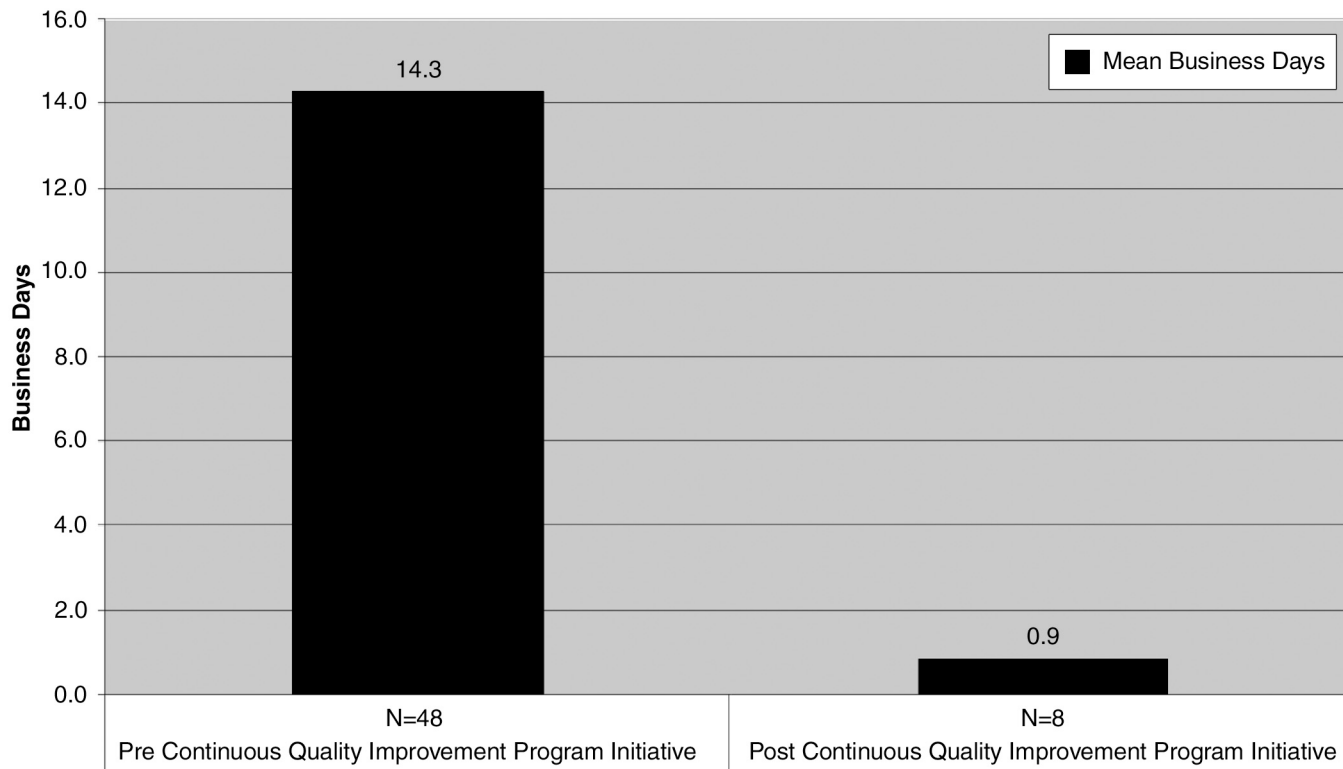
Our IBC is responsible for reviewing recombinant DNA, BSL-2, and BSL-3 research. As a CQI initiative, the

IBC administrators wanted to streamline the protocol review process to decrease the turnaround time. A long protocol review process adversely impacts the ability of investigators to initiate research and affects their satisfaction with our office. A retrospective analysis of protocol review times led us to focus on drafting protocol contingency letters during the IBC meetings.

Protocol contingencies are concerns that the reviewers have with the submitted research protocols. These must be reconciled before the investigator is allowed to proceed with the proposed experiments. Previously, the IBC administrators would document the concerns of the protocol reviewers and other committee members during committee meetings and collate their findings after the meeting. This process led to interpretive differences

Table 1

Turnaround time for the BHC office to issue IBC protocol contingency letters.



among the administrators and resulted in delayed clarification of the exact written protocol contingencies. As a result of this problem, the drafting of formalized IBC protocol contingency letters was being held up administratively. Over the four-year period prior to our quality improvement initiative, an average of 14.3 business days (N=48) were needed to issue these contingency letters.

We hypothesized that the process of graphically displaying proposed written protocol contingencies during the IBC meetings would allow systematic analysis, clarification, discussion, and consensus about which contingencies will be formally applied to each protocol, so that the drafting of contingency letters by the BioHazard Compliance office would occur more quickly. To test our hypothesis, we used a computer and video projector to project the text of the contingencies proposed by the BHC office staff and committee members onto a large screen that could be viewed by all IBC participants in the meeting room. The IBC administrators and committee members could discuss, alter, and agree upon the contingencies during the meetings, thus eliminating differences among administrators attempting to draft letters afterwards.

Following the initiation of this CQI effort, the BHC office needed an average of only 0.9 business days (N=8) to issue contingency letters over a one-year period (Table 1). This CQI effort significantly reduced the turnaround time for IBC protocol review by shortening the time required for the BHC office to finalize and draft protocol con-

tingency letters for the investigators to reconcile, prior to protocol approval.

We believe that adopting our process might be beneficial to other biosafety compliance units that face similar challenges in efficiently managing research compliance activities. By following our process, protocol contingencies can be agreed upon, refined, and drafted during the scheduled IBC meetings, thus allowing administrators to quickly communicate the decisions about their proposed research protocols to the investigators. In addition, by decreasing the turnaround time in the protocol review process, we can promise investigators more timely reviews of their protocols.

Authors' Note

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Reference

Nolte, K. B., Stewart, D. M., O'Hair, K. C., Gannon, W. L., Briggs, M. S., Barron, A. M., et al. (2008). Speaking the right language: The scientific method as a framework for a continuous quality improvement program within academic medical research compliance units. *Academic Medicine*, 83(10), 941-948.

Summary Materials Available from National Bed Bug Summit from the EPA Pesticide Program Updates

EPA has posted the following information from the National Bed Bug Summit held April 14-15 in Arlington, Virginia:

- the final agenda
- a public docket (docket ID EPA-HQ-OPP-2009-0190, available at www.regulations.gov)
- a link to access the recording of the webinar of the morning of the first day of the summit
- a summary of workgroup results
- a summary or recommendations developed at the summit

The Summit recommendations will be presented to the Pesticide Program Dialogue Committee meeting on April 22. For more information, see www.epa.gov/oppfead1/cb/ppdc/bedbug-summit/index.html