Advisory Panel on Clinical Trials
Meeting Summary

Overview

On October 6, 2014, the PCORI Clinical Trials Advisory Panel (CTAP) convened for the third time to provide input on the proposal for PCORI's Methods Consultation project, to consider requirements for PCORI funded projects, and to discuss methodology standards for clinical trials.

The Advisory Panel on Clinical Trials is made up of 10 representatives, including patients, clinical trialists, biostatisticians, epidemiologists, and an expert in the ethical dimensions of clinical trials. The Panel also includes two ex-officio members from PCORI's Methodology Committee, Dr. Steven Goodman and Dr. Mary Tinetti. The meeting was open to the public via webinar, and meeting materials were posted to the website in advance of the session.

The meeting's chair, Dr. Elizabeth Stuart, provided an update to the full Panel regarding the subcommittees that were created following the webinar meeting in August. PCORI staff gave several presentations regarding the Methods Consultation, PCORnet's Aspirin Trial, requirements for PCORI's funded clinical trials, and PCORI's methodology standards.

Related Information

- About This Advisory Panel
- Meeting Details and Materials
- About PCORI's Methodology Committee
- Advisory Panel on Clinical Trials Summer Webinar
- Advisory Panel on Clinical Trials Winter 2015 Meeting
- PCORI's Proposal for Peer Review of Primary Research and Public Release of Research Findings
- Advisory Panel on Clinical Trials' Comments to PCORI's Proposal for Peer Review of Primary Research and Public Release of Research Findings

Subcommittee Updates

Subcommittees were identified as priorities during the summer webinar, with topics including recruitment, accrual, and retention (RAR); monitoring of funded clinical trials (MFCT); and standardization of complex concepts and their terminology (SCCT). Since their last meeting, volunteers were solicited to chair each subcommittee and scopes of work were developed by the newly appointed chairs and the panel's leadership team:

1. **Subcommittee on Recruitment, Accrual, and Retention (RAR)**
   Chaired by Margo Michaels, MPH this subcommittee goals will inform PCORI Funding Announcements and related review criteria, guide PCORI monitoring of funded contracts by providing technical assistance and support, and provide additional direction regarding the engagement of healthcare stakeholders around recruitment, accrual and retention.

2. **Subcommittee on Monitoring of Funded Clinical Trials (MFCT)**
   Chaired by Craig Nichols, MD this subcommittee will provide guidance, as requested, on topics relating to the monitoring of funded clinical trials, which may include, but are not limited to:
   - PCORI Data Safety Monitoring Board (DSMB) policy
   - Training materials for DSMB members, including non-traditional DSMB members, like patients and stakeholders, who may be less familiar with the role of DSMBs
   - Monitoring of PCORI's large pragmatic clinical trials
   - PCORI's monitoring process of funded clinical trials, to ensure that post-award changes and other issues are handled appropriately

3. **Subcommittee on Standardization of Complex Concepts and their Terminology (SCCT)**
   Chaired by Merrick Zwarenstein, PhD, this subcommittee will provide clearer definitions of terms included in PCORI materials (PFAs, Methodology report, etc.) to potential applicants for PCORI funding. This will target PCORI's interests for more valid, trustworthy, and useful information that is intended to lead to better healthcare decisions and, ultimately, to improved patient outcomes.
   The CTAP Subcommittee on SCCT will provide guidance, as requested, on topics relating to the standardization of complex concepts and their terminology, which may include, but are not limited to:
   - 'pragmatic'
   - 'usual care'
   - 'mixed methods'
   - Ideal level of detail with which investigators should describe their interventions and comparison conditions

The group suggested adding PCORI staff on each of these subcommittees.

PCORI Methods Consultation and CTAP

PCORI's Associate Director for Comparative Effectiveness Research (CER) Methods and Infrastructure, Jason Gerson, PhD, gave an overview of the new Methods Consultation Service. The Methods Consultation is an additional, more focused assessment of the applications' proposed methods, including the study design, data management and monitoring, and analytic plan. The applications being assessed in the methods consultation represent the highest-scoring subset of applications reviewed in the Merit Review process. The purpose of the methods consultation is not merely to identify strengths and weaknesses in the proposed methods of the applications. With respect to identified weaknesses, PCORI will be asking these methods consultants to: (1) assess the criticality of remedying any methodological problems they identify, (2) make recommendations for remedying them, and (3) assess the difficulty of implementing the recommendations by appropriately skilled investigators. The group discussed potential areas of CTAP involvement in this new project, including reviewing the evaluation plan to be drafted by PCORI's Research Integration and Evaluation team.

Informative Presentations: PCORnet's Aspirin Trial and CTAP, Requirements for Funded Clinical Trials, and PCORI Methodology Standards and Clinical Trials

PCORI staff gave in-depth presentations to the panelists to further their understanding of PCORI's research processes and invited panelists to ask questions.

- Rachael Fleurence, PhD, Program Director, CER Methods and Infrastructure gave a presentation about PCORnet's first trial, which will investigate the optimal maintenance dose of aspirin for patients with coronary artery disease (CAD). She gave background on the decisions that led to the prioritization of this topic as PCORnet's first clinical trial and next steps for its initiation. The group discussed potential collaboration, pre and post award. Rachael Fleurence described the role of PCORnet's Clinical Trials Task Force and the panel expressed its interest in collaborating with this group.
- David Salinas, Contracts Administrator, reviewed the requirements currently in place for funded clinical trials. The discussion was focused on how PCORI can require transparency in all phases of its funded research. The panel encouraged PCORI staff to be diligent in reminding investigators of their obligation to register their studies on ClinicalTrials.gov. Jean Slutsky, PA, MSPH, PCORI's Chief Engagement and Dissemination Officer, gave a brief overview of PCORI's Proposal for Peer Review of Primary Research and Public Release of Research Findings which was open for public comment on PCORI's website. As since many panelists were making suggestions to this proposal, she encouraged the panel to officially submit comments to the proposal.
- David Hickam, MD, MPH, Program Director, Clinical Effectiveness Research, gave a presentation on the PCORI Methodology Standards most relevant to clinical trials. These included standards

on formulating research questions, data integrity, missing data and adaptive trials. He also presented to the panel background on the development of the PCORI Methodology Standards and explained the process for future standards development. The group discussed ways of recommending new standards to PCORI's Methodology Committee. David Hickam also mentioned the Methodology Committee's workshop on cluster randomization, and suggested the panel become involved where applicable.

Next Steps

The immediate next steps for the panel will be to have its subcommittees meet for the first time, review PCORI's evaluation plan of the Methods Consultation, submit their comments to PCORI's Proposal for Peer Review of Primary Research and Public Release of Research Findings, connect with PCORnet's Clinical Trials Task Force, and become involved with PCORnet's aspirin trial and in PCORI's Methodology Committee's workshop on cluster randomized trials.