

2023 NPCR GEORGIA SUCCESS STORY

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Project ECHO: A Georgia Story on Moving Knowledge and Building a Community

National Program of Cancer Registries SUCCESS STORY

SUMMARY

In 2021, the Georgia Cancer Registry (GCR) implemented “Project ECHO” (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) to provide continuous training to Georgia cancer registrars, enhance data abstracting and coding, and build a cancer registrar community. After two consecutive years of implementation, the GCR conducted an evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the GCR Project ECHO on data quality and acceptability.

CHALLENGE

- In 2020 and 2021, due to the pandemic, the GCR team was not allowed to conduct its regular educational meetings, conferences, and on-site trainings.
- Hospital-based cancer registrars were asked to help with the COVID-19 response, some were laid off, some had reduced work hours, while others were working from home.
- Due to hospital financial strains, some hospitals stopped reimbursing cancer registrars for their continuing educational unit training to maintain their CTR credentials.
- Many hospitals were behind in reporting; therefore, hospitals contracted out cancer abstraction and reporting to the central cancer registries.
- Cancer registrars felt isolated and overwhelmed.

SOLUTION

- Project ECHO was created by Dr. Sanjeev Arora, University of New Mexico, as a “community of practice” to provide a space where doctors could learn from experts and each other. Project ECHO is a hub and spoke knowledge-sharing network, establishing learning loops among participants.
- The GCR team created the GA-DPH Cancer Registry ECHO to establish a “cancer registrar community of practice” where Georgia cancer registrars can learn from experts and each other.
- Sessions were planned throughout two years where both central cancer registry staff presented and discussed cases and hospitals provided speakers on specific cancer sites.
- Some sessions were facilitated by hospital-based cancer registrars where the discussion covered challenges faced and solutions implemented.
- All sessions had Continuing Education Units (CEU) free of charge.

RESULTS

- In 2023, an evaluation was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the GCR Project ECHO on abstracting narrative and coding errors.
- Five hospital-based cancer registrars were selected based on their participation. Selected cancer registrars participated in five or more ECHO sessions. Once selected, a random selection of cancer abstracts by the CTRs were selected for 2019 diagnosis year (pre-ECHO) and 2020 diagnosis year (during-ECHO). Each of the Georgia Cancer Regional Coordinators (RCs) was blindly assigned an abstractor outside their coverage area to assess the abstracts based on pre-set data elements. Each RC reviewed the original abstracts for diagnosis years 2019 and 2020.
- RCs documented their findings on a spreadsheet for the selected data elements where they assess coding errors and existence of the narrative to support the codes.
- A total of 50 abstracts were reviewed for 2019 and 54 for 2020. Comparing coding errors between the two years, there was a 32% overall drop in coding errors and a 53% reduction in missing narratives. Additionally, RCs identified consistent coding errors. Prostate cancer had the most errors (both coding errors and missing narrative). Coding data elements containing the most errors were EOD Primary Tumor, Grade Clinical & Pathological, and Gleason Score Clinical and Pathological.

As a result, the RCs created an interactive (trivia format) training to address consistent coding errors. The intent of the training was to encourage cancer registrars in subsequent sessions to use the coding manual and site rules and discuss how data are being used by the central registry, emphasizing the importance of having error-free abstracts.

	Coding Errors Numbers		Missing/Insufficient Narrative Numbers	
	2019	2020	2019	2020
Breast	6	7	1	0
Colorectal	6	4	3	8
Prostate	28	16	30	8
Total	40	27	34	16

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

- The GCR interactive training addressing coding errors and abstracting narrative in a trivia-style presentation will be presented at the Georgia Tumor Registrars Association (GATRA) educational meeting. Each ECHO session after the evaluation included the citation of the coding manual, rules, and the page the rule can be found. Also, an evaluation survey was added for each ECHO session to quickly assess the CTR’s understanding, engagement and appropriateness. Discussions on how data are being used and the importance of having error-free abstracts were added.
- Based on the 2023 cancer registry ECHO, participation continues to increase. Cancer registry ECHO average monthly participation is 71, up from 50 in previous years. Hospital cancer registrars actively participate (discussion and presenting cases), and more relationships are being built with each session.
- The GCR team hosting Project ECHO platform is fully supported by the Georgia Department of Public Health (GA-DPH) and available free of charge.

STORY QUOTE

“Thank you for providing a virtual learning environment for the Georgia CTRs. These events are always helpful and provide deeper insight into how the data we collect are helpful/used.”
– Training evaluation survey responder

REGISTRY CONTACT

<https://dph.georgia.gov/chronic-disease-prevention/georgia-comprehensive-cancer-registry>



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