

2023 NPCR TEXAS SUCCESS STORY

Kristen Smith

Filling the Void: CTR Course Classes with Virtual Connectivity

National Program of Cancer Registries SUCCESS STORY

SUMMARY

Resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and a changing work environment, students interested in becoming Certified Tumor Registrars (CTRs) found themselves unable to find internships at facilities. This prevented them from meeting the experience requirements to be eligible to sit for the CTR exam. In response, the Texas Cancer Registry (TCR) and its lead trainer worked with local professors to identify students needing placement at facilities and created a mentoring program that used multiple types of online materials to address the deficit.

CHALLENGE

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare facilities stopped taking interns due to guidelines, and students were unable to obtain required internship hours to be eligible for the CTR exam.
- Remote work-based environments at facilities persisted, further pushing for an alternative to require in-person internship hours at facilities.
- The National Cancer Registrars Association (NCRA) began offering an alternative to internships: an online practicum divided into five sections, each ending with a knowledge-check quiz. However, students struggled when learning the practicum material by themselves and were often not well prepared for the comprehensive CTR exam.
- Professors at local colleges contacted TCR for help ensuring that students fulfilled CTR exam requirements and were able to take the exam successfully.
- TCR needed to identify a way to place these students or devise an alternative to the internship that would adequately prepare them for the CTR exam.

SOLUTION

- Using a combination of what the NCRA practicum offered, TCR's previously curated training program, and Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) Educate tools and quizzes, TCR developed its mentorship program in August 2022. This program served as a virtual experience in place of an in-person internship for five trailblazing students.
- TCR's lead trainer, Elizabeth Harvey, met for an hour once a week for six weeks with each student online, assessing the student's knowledge of the material before teaching the information in one of the five sections of NCRA's practicum.
- When confident with the material, students took a final quiz through NCRA for each of the five practicum sections. After taking all five quizzes, students satisfied the prerequisites to sit for the official CTR exam.

RESULTS

- TCR's mentorship program held 30 sessions among the five students over the six-week training period.
- The program experience was tailored to each student's learning needs to allow them to maximize their time together, condensing hours of internship work into small one-on-one sessions.
- All five students in the mentorship program successfully sat for and passed their CTR exam.
- Additionally, one of the program's students has since joined TCR and has even earned a merit award for their exceptional performance and contributions.
- Virtual needs will continue to grow. TCR's program fulfills that need while enabling training tailored to each student's needs, a combination that contributes to an optimal learning environment.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

- The TCR mentorship program will continue to fulfill the prerequisites needed for students preparing for the CTR exam as an alternative approach in an increasingly remote-based work environment where in-person internships at facilities are more difficult to find.
- Elizabeth continues to develop new content, refresh old material, and incorporate student's feedback.
- By constantly adapting, Elizabeth strives to provide the best support to prepare students for the comprehensive CTR exam and will continue providing TCR's supplemental program as long as it is needed.

STORY QUOTE

“What I most admire and appreciate about Elizabeth is her contribution to student success. Her unwavering support has sustained the success of our program.”
– Cancer Data Management Program Director, San Jacinto College

REGISTRY CONTACT

<http://www.dshs.texas.gov/tcr/home.aspx>



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention