

2020 Massachusetts NPCR CANCER REGISTRY SUCCESS STORY

CANCER REGISTRY NAME: Massachusetts Cancer Registry

STORY CATEGORY: Registry Operations

STORY TITLE: Massachusetts Cancer Registry Looks to the Future

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SUMMARY

For twenty-five years the Massachusetts' Cancer Registry's homegrown database Massachusetts Cancer Registry-Cancer Information Management System (MCR-CIMS) has served us well. However, with the MCR's contract requirement with the National Cancer Institute/Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results Program (NCI/SEER), it was time to leave the past behind. MCR-CIMS was managed by just one software engineer and one data manager. In spite of challenges such as annual in-house field additions and subtractions, edits, and other maintenance, it never failed to make a Call for Data ... twenty-one years of achieving National Program of Cancer Registry (NPCR) data submission standards and North American Association of Central Cancer Registries (NAACCR) Gold certification. But looking to the future, it was time to embrace new database technology.

CHALLENGE

There have been several challenges, many still ongoing as we made the move to make our operations more efficient. This list is as follows:

1. COVID-19 pandemic was a game changer with the majority of MCR staff now teleworking. Special permission is required for staff other than managers to be on-site.
2. Technical issues such as VPN connections to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) work computers.
3. MDPH work computers need an upgrade to Windows 10, 64 bit for new database connection.
4. Trainings must be held via internet versus on-site.

SOLUTION

The MCR worked efficiently to determine their requirements to begin the migration to a new more innovative database management system. Ten new computers were ordered with uncertain arrival time, so operations staff were occupied with other quality control and education efforts. While we were waiting, the COVID-19 pandemic arrived with a vengeance. Due to an executive order by Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker, all executive branch state employees who are considered non-essential were mandated to telework beginning March 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. At approximately 9:00 pm on Sunday, March 15th MDPH staff were informed that telework would begin on Monday, March 16th. Many of us went on-site to Boston on Wednesday, March 18th collecting folders, notebooks, papers, and anything else that we thought we would need for an uncertain period.

We focused on the following tasks for the database migration: (1) order of ten personal computers; (2) order of eight laptops (docking stations); (3) securing VPN connection for all staff; (4) training; and (5) enlisting Medical Records Associates contractors to assist with case processing and consolidation. And so, we were off and running in a new world of uncertainty.

RESULTS

The results of our efforts:

1. New PCs: On March 20, 2020 the MCR's software engineer and data manager received their new PCs; by July 24, 2020 we had an additional three staff who received their new PCs. However, there are still staff who require IT assistance with technical requirements to ensure that laptops used for teleworking could communicate with their work pcs and vice versa.
2. Laptops: There are eight laptops (docking stations) that have been ordered.
3. VPN: All MCR staff now have VPN and remote desktop permission.
4. Trainings: Linda Coyle of IMS started SEER*DMS Trainings on Wednesday, August 5, 2020. These trainings are being held via webcast almost every morning at 9am unless there are no processing and case consolidation issues. Operations staff attend and are optional for other staff.
5. MRA contractors: Two MRA contractors now have VPN certificates. The MCR's Assistant Director of Operations will conduct training sessions for contractors.

Our software engineer transmitted the last MCR*CIMS file (1995-2017) on September 23, 2020. Tests files had been previously submitted for edit failure evaluation. Our Assistant Director of Operations submitted 2018 and forward data on September 22, 2020.



The result was the MCR went live on September 28, 2020. This means that we can submit to the NCI/SEER Call for Data due on November 2, 2020 and next to the CDC/NPCR and NAACCR Calls for Data due on December 1, 2020.

There is still much to do, but we made it! Probably the most exciting comment the operations group heard was "Your data were pretty clean." This was an incredible team effort!

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

The MCR still has much to learn about new database features: management reports, data queries, geocoding procedures, connecting to SAS Enterprise, and death clearance. However, MCR staff are excited to be on this new adventure.

Thanks to MCR staff listed below... and our inspiration from Ben Michels (six-year-old son of Fernanda Silva Michels) when he briefly attended one of our weekly webex MCR staff meetings to remind us: "Team Work makes the Dream Work"!



MCR Staff: Rasaan Ajao (CTR), Amy Cora (Office Support Specialist), Nancy Donovan (CTR), Susan Gershman (Director), Nancy Klein (CTR), Richard Knowlton (Epidemiologist), Annie MacMillan (Epidemiologist), Jayne Nussdorfer (CTR), Fernanda Silva Michels (Assistant Director of Operations), Mary Mroszczyk (Special Projects Coordinator), Jeremiah Nesser (Technical Support), Barbara Rhodes (CTR), Pam Shuttle (CTR), Stacie Sullivan (training for CTR), Hung Tran (Software Engineer)

Special Thanks: Tom Gutermuth and Dan Sionkiewicz (MDPH IT) and Linda Coyle and IMS staff.

REGISTRY CONTACT INFORMATION

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