Clinical research nurses are essential in the coordination of clinical trials and the management of research participants. Without a stable, knowledgeable research nurse workforce, the conduct of research is affected. A research nurse residency is a novel approach to preparing new graduate nurses for the oncology research nurse role. This article will describe the development and content of the research nurse residency and how this approach is being used to address a need for clinical research nurses to support burgeoning clinical trials at a National Cancer Institute–designated comprehensive cancer center.

**AT A GLANCE**

- Clinical research nurses play a vital role in the conduct of clinical trials.
- Training of clinical research nurses, as well as the evaluation and revision of training to ensure competency, is variable.
- A collaborative 12-month research nurse residency for new graduate nurses was created to help alleviate the issues of recruitment and retention of clinical research nurses.

**KEYWORDS**
internship; residency; clinical research nurse

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# Clinical Research Nursing

## Development of a residency program

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Clinical research nursing is a specialty nursing practice recognized by the American Nurses Association that focuses on the care of research participants and the management of clinical trials. Although the clinical research nurse (CRN) is an integral member of the research team and the past 20 years have seen a growth in the number of nurses working as CRNs (Spilsbury et al., 2008), institutions have done little in the way of providing infrastructure for training CRNs. Therefore, CRNs often lack formal educational preparation for their role (Jones, Wilson, Carter, & Jester, 2009). This can result in consequences that affect patient safety or jeopardize study integrity (Brandt et al., 2011), In addition, the lack of an effective orientation program also may contribute to turnover (Park & Jones, 2010).

At the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, a National Cancer Institute–designated comprehensive cancer center in Houston, CRNs are integral to the conduct of clinical research. In 2016, more than 1,600 clinical trials were conducted in 45 departments within the institution, and more than 8,600 patients were registered in therapeutic studies. With this volume of trials and research participants, recruiting and retaining a stable CRN workforce is vital.

In an effort to alleviate some of these issues, the research nurse residency (RNR) was developed and implemented in 2016. A multidepartment collaborative endeavor, the RNR is a novel approach to training new graduate nurses specifically for oncology research nurse positions, a process that has not yet been defined in the literature and represents a departure from traditional practice at this institution. This article will describe the development and content of the RNR and how this approach is being used to address a need for CRNs to support burgeoning clinical trials at this institution.

## Background

Several factors contribute to the difficulty of recruitment and retention of the CRN within the institution. Despite the increase in the number and complexity of clinical trials, clinical research nursing remains a relatively unknown nursing specialty (Schmotzer & Ness, 2015). Academic nursing programs include varying degrees of research courses; however, the emphasis is on evidence-based practice nursing and nursing research, not the role of a nurse in clinical trials management (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2008). In addition, the expansion of clinical research trials has contributed to rising demand (Schmotzer & Ness, 2015), generating the need to develop a pipeline of new CRNs to keep up with the ever-growing number of trials in the institution.

Common challenges to staff retention identified in the general nursing literature include insufficient staffing levels, long