Overcoming the Challenges in Continuing Advanced Therapy Education During COVID-19

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### Aim/Objectives

COVID19 raised challenges for many in health care, and the need to ensure continued training for all was a key focus area.

For the nurses on the UKCRF Clinical Research Facility at The Christie NHS Foundation Trust it was paramount that this training had a focus on the care and treatment of patients receiving Advanced Cellular Therapies.

This is in line with the continuous patient recruitment (25 patients pre-screened and 11 consented) the Cell Therapy research team had achieved during this time, which included a mixture of patients due to receive immunotherapies and cell therapies, for various disease types.

Cell therapies are also accompanied by an array of intricacies and specialist sides effects that the CRF nurses needed to feel comfortable and confident in treating.

The way in which training had been delivered previously was no longer feasible in line with COVID related restrictions, and the team needed to ensure staff still received the high level of training they were accustomed too.

### Methodology

Utilising a previously established programme, the framework was developed by the Senior Practise Facilitator, in line with staffing and resource availability.

Structure for training included topics previously covered in group teaching, but could not currently be conducted in this way.

The program includes topics such as:
- An Overview of Cellular Therapy
- Cytokine Release Syndrome
- Immune Effector Cell-Associated Neurotoxicity Syndrome
- Inpatient management of patients receiving immune effector cells
- Administration of preparative regimens including growth factors
- Prophylaxis and antifungals management
- Infusion of Cellular Products
- Emergency T-Cell Administration Training

Teaching sessions which were previously delivered in a group setting were developed into 1-2-1, personalised sessions, allowing for more time with individual students. Virtual sessions and specialised transplant and CAR-T in-house training were also utilised when available.

Previously nurses would complete a placement on our Transplant ward, however this was not possible due to staff redeployment and COVID related restrictions. These placements are planned to restart once restrictions ease.

### Results

Attendees of the 1-2-1 sessions verbally reported feeling more confident to ask questions they may not have in a group teaching session.

They also reported finding the tailor made approach to be more constructive to their personal training needs.

As of May 2021, training compliance for core training modules was at 86%, inclusive of all staff eligible to complete the training. These include modules such as ‘An overview of the cell therapy process’, ‘Inpatient management’, and ‘Infusion of Cellular products’

86% of eligible staff had completed to in-house basic transplant day, and 43% had completed The Christie’s ‘Principles of CAR-T’ study day.

An audit is currently being completed to assess to effectiveness of this new training format, and the ways in which it may be improved.

### Conclusion

Ensuring training in this specialised field has proven crucial for both the safety of the patients in our care, and also the confidence and competencies of the staff deliver these. Developing previous methods of delivering this, in line with current standards has been a proven benefit to all involved.