

2023 NPCR Texas Cancer Registry SUCCESS STORY

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Filling the Void: CTR Course Classes with Virtual Connectivity

SUMMARY

Resulting from 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 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 required, 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 and its lead trainer, Elizabeth Harvey, for help ensuring that students fulfilled requirements for and were able to successfully take the CTR exam.
- Elizabeth 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's mentorship program served as a virtual experience in place of an in-person internship for five trailblazing students starting August 2022.
- Elizabeth 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.

- Once 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.
- Elizabeth tailored the program experience 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 Elizabeth'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 individuality for each student's needs, a combination that contributes to an optimal learning environment for these students.

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 preparing 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." – Carla, Program Director

REGISTRY CONTACT

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