

Innovation abounds at the 2016 Inspiring Hope Ideathon

By Barbara M. Bolten

The winners of the 2016 “Inspiring Hope” Ideathon have developed an innovative concept to raise awareness of clinical trials and increase patient participation. **INC Research Holdings** and the nonprofit **Center for Information and Study on Clinical Research Participation** (CISCRP) created the Ideathon to find solutions to the problem of low patient participation in clinical research. Submissions from around the world offered proposals to educate and engage more people in the clinical trial process.

Team “C2: The Clinical Study Change Agent Collective” was selected by a panel of six expert judges as the winner from 14 finalists drawn from a pool of almost 70 entries from around the world. Team C2 received a \$10,000 award from CISCRP to advance the idea.

Angela Radcliffe, EVP of **FCBVIO**, and Patrick Tobin, EVP of **FCB Health**, led the C2 team. Other team members included Meghan Kates, Tony Hursey and Donna Fowle. To develop their proposal, the team drew on a variety of specialties at FCB Health, including patient recruitment and retention, technology, innovation, broadcasting and analytics, and reached

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out to the pharma industry for advice. Their winning proposal, HealthProof, is a program to combine corporate social responsibility (CSR) and wellness programs with tools to improve the health literacy of employees and their understanding of clinical research.

Although clinical trials are crucial for the development of new drugs and medical treatments, according to INC Research only about 5% of the population participate in them. A lack of awareness and understanding among the general public about clinical research underlies this lack of participation.

Team C2’s strategy offers new ways to link issues that people are passionate about, such as fighting breast cancer or Alzheimer’s disease, to clinical research. Radcliffe said, “How can we connect clinical trials to things that people truly care about so that they can see the intrinsic value of participation?” The HealthProof solution envisions incorporating educational tools about clinical trials into CSRs and wellness programs, which are increasing in popularity throughout the corporate community.

“There is a general lack of health literacy about what goes into the whole process of clinical research and clinical trials,” said Tobin. “This whole idea of health literacy is foundational.” Achieving higher levels of health literacy could enable greater acceptance of and normalization of clinical trials, and lead to greater patient participation.

HealthProof will be a package of health literacy learning tools that includes modules, templates and a portal that employers can plug into existing CSR or wellness programs. Employees will be able to learn about causes they care about and share the information.

According to Radcliffe, “If you’re an employee who’s excited about a cause such as Alzheimer’s disease, then we want to give you the tools that you need to become an empowered advocate.”

Jennifer Byrne, CEO of **PMG Research** and mentor to Team C2, offered another possible example: “The employer would be pushing out information to their employee base about breast cancer itself, early detection, treatment options and clinical trials awareness, and perhaps within that community, make some of those resources to their employees available as far as where to go for a clinical trial.”

The novel concept of recruiting employers to raise clinical trial awareness caught the attention of the Ideathon judges. According to the **American Health Policy Institute**, in 2012, U.S. employers spent \$579 billion on healthcare costs, and covered nearly 170 million lives. Participation in clinical

cal trials can enhance a patient's healthcare; for example, patients may receive disease screening and diagnosis, which could facilitate earlier intervention. Further, increasing patients' overall health literacy can contribute to wellness.

The potential of HealthProof to help employers to reduce costs, increase wellness among employees and facilitate advocacy for clinical trial participation offers a compelling alignment of interests within the industry. "There is a direct ROI that a company could see in a reduction in their healthcare costs," said Radcliffe. "If they have a wellness program in place, this would enhance that program."

Byrne agreed. "The benefit to employers is largely financial," she said. "They are

funding a huge percentage of total healthcare spend. If clinical research serves as that catalyst for their employee base to become more proactive in their healthcare decisions and options, it will lead to reducing their costs."

HealthProof also rose to the top of the competition because it had a clear path for widespread implementation. According to Clare Grace, Ph.D., vice president of Site and Patient Access, INC Research, "There was a mechanism to implement that was well thought out; also it could be implemented on a global scale quite rapidly and touch a very large number of people." The team anticipates offering the product first to pharmaceutical companies through the collaborative [TransCelerate BioPharma](#), to CROs

via the [Association of Clinical Research Organizations](#) (ACRO) and eventually to a broader audience of companies.

Raising awareness of clinical trials could also help reduce the cost of patient recruitment. "Pharma spends an extraordinary amount of R&D money on patient recruitment costs because we don't have good general public awareness," said Byrne. The sharing of information by employees through social networks could increase the effect.

"Being able to embed awareness of clinical trials into a corporate wellness program will really support the spread of information," said Grace. "It will not only make people aware of clinical trials, but it will connect them to the appropriate trial for them, their families and their friends." 