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TO: Department Chairs and Department Administrators
   Center Directors
   Richard L. Moss, PhD, Senior Associate Dean
   Robert N. Golden, MD, Dean

FROM: Marc K. Drezner, MD, Senior Associate Dean
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RE: ICTR BMI Services in support of Research

The Institute of Clinical and Translational Research (ICTR) Biomedical Informatics (BMI) component has many functions, including obtaining and making available data from HealthLink and Enterprise Data Warehouse (EDW) available in a secure form for research. Not surprisingly, the number and complexity of requests made to the BMI team for such data are rapidly growing. Indeed, the HealthLink/EDW-based data query submissions have grown from 13 to 40 per month over the past 18 months. These requests range from those that are relatively simple (e.g. feasibility counts to assess potential available subjects/participants) to queries that require significantly more time to assess the project, develop the queries, complete the data extraction, and package the resulting data securely.

The complexities associated with accessing Protected Health Information (PHI) from HealthLink or EDW require the expertise of faculty and data technicians who review and interpret data query requests (translating clinical definitions into computable algorithms), analysts who program the data query, and those who receive, clean, and package data for secure delivery through a HIPAA-compliant infrastructure. Ensuring that a data query has been appropriately reviewed and approved by the UW Health Sciences Institutional Review Board and is compliant with UW-Health data use policies are additional required steps. At present, a relatively simple query request may require up to 20 days to process, while a complex query may require up to 45 days.

We recognize that our responsiveness to query submissions must improve considerably. Therefore, we are expanding our abilities to manage requests in several important ways including: 1) hiring additional analysts to increase the request processing bandwidth, as well as a full-time SMPH-based Honest Broker, who will assist with review and approval of queries that require the use of PHI data; and 2) developing and utilizing a new prioritization method to ensure queries are directed efficiently into appropriate workflows. All query requests to the BMI can be initiated online through the request form here: ictr.wisc.edu/consults/biomedical-informatics/

The rapid growth of translational research activities that rely on our BMI infrastructure is exciting and we anticipate introducing a more rapid response option for queries that are commonly requested. We know these enhancements will augment a wide variety of research conducted here at UW and your input will be key to the success of the BMI team. Please stay tuned for more updates from the BMI team and do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions.