

## **The Life of a Study Coordinator**

**By Cheryl Ryan**

I clock in and grab a cup of coffee. So far, so good. I start going through my mail. The first envelope contains a lab report. It has an abnormal result that Mrs. Q's primary care physician needs to see. I decide to fax it over before I get distracted, and leave the rest of the mail sitting unopened on my desk.

The fax machine has an incoming data query that needs immediate attention. I put down the lab report, pick up the query, and walk over to the regulatory binder cabinets. The documents I started pulling for the site monitor yesterday are still on the counter. The site monitor needs them before she leaves today, so I decide to finish pulling them and then research the query. I lay the query down on the counter and grab the regulatory binder.

I remember that I haven't made copies of the source documents for the two screenings coming in this morning. I open the regulatory binder and pull out the masters because they have to be ready when the patients arrive. Since I'm going to the copy machine, I can also make copies of the patient information packets, so I grab those masters, too. I walk to the copy machine. The machine is on the fritz, so I begin walking upstairs to the other copy machine. I make a mental note to call the copy machine repair guy.

Just before I arrive at the upstairs copy machine, the transcription director asks me to interpret Dr. P's chicken scratching. I set my copy pages down on the edge of her desk and pick up Dr. P's scrip, or maybe it's his grocery list. I'm half-way through the first word when the intercom summons me to the blue pod STAT. I rush down to the blue pod. The team leader tells me that Dr. W would like me to discuss study XXX with Mr. S. After talking with Mr. S for about half an hour, he mentions that his wife is sitting out in the waiting room, and he would like me to repeat everything to her. I do. He then mentions that he and the missus may spend the summer with the kids in Michigan. He says he'll call his kids. I say I'll come back in 10 minutes.

I look for his medical chart so I can write a progress note. Before I can find it – or establish its existence – the marketing director pages me. She wants to know if I've written the article I promised her for the clinic newsletter. She needs it by the end of the day because the newsletter is about to go to press. My first draft is sitting on my computer somewhere, or maybe it's at home. I promise her she'll have it by the end of the day. I head back to my office.

The scheduling secretary is sitting in my chair. She needs ten of the clinic charts I borrowed for tomorrow's schedule. I say I'll drop them off as soon as I review them for study eligibility. Our research assistant trots up. She asks if the source documents are ready for the two screenings, because the patients are already in exam rooms. I run back to the upstairs copy machine, but the masters aren't there. Who could have taken them?

I am paged overhead by the operator. Mr. K, a subject, was hospitalized last night and his nurse is on the phone. She wants to know about the study drug. I ask the operator to get her name and say I'll call her back as soon as I can. I grab Mr. K's chart and call the nurse back, but the local hospital has never heard of her or Mr. K. I pull out the phone book to call other hospitals in the area. The first one says I have to fax over a records release before they will tell me if Mr. K has been admitted. I would ask for the nurse, but I've misplaced the note with her name on it.

Our research assistant pages me. Mrs. T, a study subject, has been in an exam room with her eyes dilated for 45 minutes, waiting for me to test her eyes, check her vitals, do an ECG, and I don't remember what else. Which study is she in? I think she needs photos. Do I take 3 field or 7 field photos? Digital or film? Wait a minute. I take a deep breath. I need to set some priorities. Should I call the research assistant about Mrs. T or look for Mr. K or review those ten charts or write the newsletter article or talk to Mr. S or decipher Dr. P's scrip or call the copy machine repair guy or track down the source document and patient information packet masters or research the data query or finish pulling the documents for the site monitor or fax Mrs. Q's lab report or see if there is anything even more important in the mail?

Not to worry, it's time for my morning break and my cup of coffee hasn't been touched. But first...

**Author**

Cheryl Ryan, CCRC, COA, OSA, is a Study Coordinator at National Ophthalmic Research Institute. Contact her at 1.239.938.1284 or [cherylryan@eye.md](mailto:cherylryan@eye.md).