

The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center



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"Partnering with MediTract has also yielded a wide range of benefits for our Legal Services Department, it puts us in touch in a positive way with all other departments and helps build and strengthen these relationships."

Barbara C. Brown, J.D.
Associate Vice President and Managing Legal Officer
MD Anderson Cancer Center

MediTract solution aids one of the world's top cancer centers to oversee and manage complex research agreements.

The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, a world-renowned medical center devoted exclusively to cancer patient care, research, education and prevention, had been managing its thousands of contracts manually for decades. The difficulties in managing, gaining access to and reviewing the volume of contracts the center had to process were becoming a problem and growing by the week. And with nearly 5,000 of its total staff of more than 17,000 accessing contracts routinely, the necessity of gaining greater control of cost and quality and improving ease-of-use had become paramount.

"In 2001, we turned to MediTract's TractManager to help us first organize our business contracts and enable easy, secure access and use by those authorized to do so," said Barbara Brown, associate vice president and managing legal officer for the cancer center. "Because of the initial implementation of TractManager, the institution then decided to extend the TractManager system to its research contracts, which comprise about 60 percent of all the center's agreements. Being one of the largest cancer research institutions in the world, it was imperative that our research contracts were also organized, accurate and accessible."

Today, MD Anderson has four contract databases (legal, supply chain, managed care and research) which are managed via the TractManager system. The research database alone contains 17 different types of contracts, including clinical studies, federal grants, fellowship grants, laboratory study agreements, master

research agreements, material transfer agreements and sponsored research agreements. Each type of contract has a defined workflow process which aids in gathering the appropriate information for loading into the database. Examples of documents included in the workflow process within the contract file consist of 1) an instruction sheet that is created for each contract type (this sheet identifies fields required for completion and information that should be populated for each field); 2) a cover sheet that is specific to each contract type and is provided to the individual entering the contract into the system; 3) grant award notification or clinical study/research agreement which MD Anderson populates as the "main" agreement within the contract file; and 4) supporting documentation, which are added as attachments to the contract file. These supporting documents include a research compliance checklist, a contract summary page showing how information appears within the contract file and other supporting documentation which may include correspondence, letters or memos. MediTract's fields enable MD Anderson to track all of this information for its research agreements and identify the awarding agency or study sponsor, principal investigator by name, protocol number and award or study title.

As noted, these contracts are referenced by thousands of employees throughout the year, so the workflow required a system that would be flexible and accurate enough to allow for regular use and monitoring. In 2009, the center had more than 23,000 contracts, with 13,600 of them in the research database – 90 percent

of which were active.

“In our case, it wasn’t a matter of simply changing systems,” Brown continued. “We had to start from scratch and build an electronic database from manual paper records, then develop a customized contract management system. MediTract provided all of the staff to scan the documents, create the database, and train staff in the use of TractManager.”

MediTract’s implementation process was critical to building MD Anderson’s contract database. Company representatives were onsite throughout the entire process, converting all of the center’s paper documents into a customized, online database. MediTract also helped set up new policies for finalizing and managing agreements. Initially set up only as a document warehouse, TractManager eventually became a daily operations tool, and an integrated part of the workflow that has improved the creation, review, approval and amendments of contracts. It also increased collaboration among various departments. And, being an online system, there were no maintenance or support costs, no hardware or software costs, and the embedded security encryption allowed for an unlimited number of registered users.

MediTract’s patented TractManager technology extracts critical data from scanned documents and loads the information into the correct location within the database. Then, it enables multiple users from different departments to view and utilize the data as needed. The system’s easy-to-use interface makes searching for documents and storing important information almost effortless. The customized reporting feature allows searching by contract type, critical date, department or expiration date, while users can access a customized dashboard to quickly reference and review contracts within the database without searching the entire contract library. MediTract also helps to ensure compliance with HIPAA and all internal legal and corporate requirements, and provides staff with all routine management and oversight of all contracts.

“MD Anderson processes approximately 250 research contracts per month, including changes, addendums and deletions,” said Brown. “With an average of one hundred of these documents being added as new contracts, the volume is high and the complexity considerable. And because various contract types are uploaded

into TractManager by different individuals, quality control is of particular importance. While MediTract manages the volume of contracts very efficiently, each individual uploading the documents is responsible for the accuracy of the contract information added to the system. Without the inherent flexibility that the system offers, this task would be much more difficult.”

“Partnering with MediTract has also yielded a wide range of benefits for our Legal Services Department,” Brown continued. “It puts us in touch in a positive way with all other departments and helps build and strengthen these relationships. It encourages people to work together collegially and helps break down walls between various branches of our organization. In an organization as large as MD Anderson, that’s unique and important.”

Created in 1941 by the Texas legislature as part of The University of Texas System, MD Anderson is one of the world’s most respected cancer centers. In 2009, the center saw more than 96,000 patients, and was ranked by U.S. News & World as the top hospital in the nation for cancer care. It also ranked first in the number of National Cancer Institute grants awarded and total amount of grant funds, and invested more than \$500 million in research.

MD Anderson routinely attracts patients from all over the country and the world, with one-third of its patients coming from outside of Texas.