

Valley-Mount Sinai Comprehensive Cancer Care Receives \$652,000 Grant to Fund Initiatives to Increase Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Cancer Clinical Trials

Ridgewood, NJ, November 2, 2022 – Valley-Mount Sinai Comprehensive Cancer Care is pleased to be the recipient of a \$652,000 grant over three years from BD (Becton, Dickinson and Company), a global medical technology company headquartered in Franklin Lakes, NJ, to The Valley Hospital Foundation. The grant will help fund diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) interventions that will increase access to clinical trials and leading-edge healthcare opportunities for underrepresented patient populations, including racial and ethnic minority groups.

In August 2021, Valley Health System was selected as one of 75 research sites nationwide to participate in a pilot project, launched in collaboration between the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) and the Association of Community Cancer Centers (ACCC), which focused on increasing racial and ethnic diversity in cancer clinical trials participants. The goal of this pilot project was to establish strategies and solutions to increase participation in cancer treatment clinical trials, particularly among individuals from historically underrepresented racial and ethnic communities.

As a participating research site, Valley conducted a site self-assessment to identify any policies, procedures, or programs that may affect which patients are screened for and offered a clinical trial. Research and care team members also underwent implicit bias training to acknowledge and mitigate bias that may affect which patients are offered clinical trials.

“I am proud of Valley’s participation in the ASCO and ACCC pilot program, but I am even prouder of the steps that our teams are taking to implement change and improve DEI in our cancer clinical trials,” said Taja Ferguson, Director of Valley’s Okonite Research Center.

Using the knowledge gained from participation in this pilot program, Valley has drafted The Oncology Program Clinical Trial Diversity Initiative, which includes several internal interventions that, when acted upon, will enhance clinical trial recruitment and ensure participation of underrepresented groups in cancer clinical trials is achieved. Interventions include a ride share program, health literacy and awareness campaigns, expanded eligibility criteria, relationships with faith-based organizations, creation of a community needs assessment and patient-friendly navigation system, and increased use of telemedicine technologies.

“When we accepted the invitation to participate in the pilot program, our intention was to learn as much as we could and use this knowledge to build upon the tools provided to us,” said Ephraim Casper, MD, FACP, Chief Medical Officer, Valley-Mount Sinai Comprehensive Cancer Care. “Now, with a grant provided by BD, we are beginning to see our hard work take shape.”

“As a global organization, we recognize that we have a responsibility to drive critical improvements across the healthcare system that help enhance outcomes, improve safety, and expand access to quality care,” said Bill Sigmund, Executive Vice President and Chief Medical Officer, BD. “We know that cancer is a disease that disproportionately impacts people of color because often, they face disparate access to routine screenings. With this grant from BD, we are proud to support Valley Health System and The Oncology Program Clinical Trial Diversity Initiative in doing what is right to further address health inequities in clinical trials.”

The Oncology Program Clinical Trial Diversity Initiative is slated to roll out over the course of the next five years.

Universal Results From a Successful Pilot Project

With pilot testing now complete, ASCO and ACCC have released novel strategies and practical solutions with oncologists nationwide to increase the participation of underrepresented racial and ethnic populations in cancer treatment trials.

Published in the Journal of Clinical Oncology, an ASCO-ACCC research statement titled, [Increasing Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Cancer Clinical Trials: An American Society of Clinical Oncology and Association of Community Cancer Centers Joint Research Statement](#), details specific actions to engage the entire cancer clinical trial ecosystem in expanding the participation of underrepresented individuals in research that advances progress against cancer. The recommendations summarized in this statement focus on key areas that address barriers to cancer clinical trials including, access to clinical trials, equity focused design, partnerships among stakeholder groups, continuous education and training, equity, diversity, and inclusion investment, and sharing data and strategies.

ASCO and ACCC also jointly released the [Just ASK™ Increasing Diversity in Cancer Clinical Research: An ACCC-ASCO](#)

[Training Program](#) and the [ASCO-ACCC Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Research Site Self-Assessment](#). Both the Just ASK™ Training Program and Site Self-Assessment were revised based on feedback from the 75 research sites who participated in the Pilot Project.

The Just ASK™ Training Program is an online implicit bias training program available for all members of a research team. The Program consists of five interactive modules that present the broader context of structural and systemic racism, the role of implicit bias in clinical trial selection, vignettes with real-world examples of implicit bias, and guidance for mitigating disparities in cancer research settings.

The Site Self-Assessment is a quality improvement tool that helps clinical trial sites and research teams identify opportunities to improve EDI in clinical trials while doing an internal review of existing policies, programs, and procedures. Completion of the Site Self-Assessment enables sites to identify opportunities for improvement.

These resources are free to the research community. ASCO and ACCC plan to continually enhance and expand upon these resources using feedback from the community as a guide.

Additional assets available online:  [Photos \(1\)](#)

<https://news.bd.com/2022-11-02-Valley-Mount-Sinai-Comprehensive-Cancer-Care-Receives-652,000-Grant-to-Fund-Initiatives-to-Increase-Diversity,-Equity,-and-Inclusion-in-Cancer-Clinical-Trials>