

PUBLISHED MAY 7, 2021 IN [TEAMWORK](#)

Saving time to save lives: this Best-in-Class Team Award winner is always racing the clock

How NYU Perlmutter Cancer Center and Essex Management streamlined clinical trials.

[LAVONNE ROBERTS](#)

SUBSCRIBE TO WORK LIFE

Get stories about tech and teams in your inbox

[Subscribe](#)

5-SECOND SUMMARY

- In clinical trials, newly discovered treatments can save lives. But activating a new study can take 60-150 days.
- The Clinical Trials Office at NYU's Perlmutter Cancer Center wanted to move faster. With Essex Management, they created the "em-PACT" solution to reduce study activation time.
- Even non-technical teams were able to fully adopt the new platform, despite never having used Jira and Confluence before.
- The team saw a 26% decrease in the activation timeline within a year of implementing em-Pact; and it activated over 100 clinical trials during the last year – despite most of the staff working remotely.

- To recognize this groundbreaking work, we proudly honor NYU Perlmutter Cancer Center and Essex Management with the Team '21 Best in Class, Non-Technical Award.

In most businesses, time is money. But in clinical trials, saving time can mean saving lives.

This is something Lalta Dhanantwari knows on a professional level, as well as a deeply personal one. When he was 17, Dhanantwari's mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. "It was a tough time seeing what my mom was going through with chemo and radiation, and I knew very little about clinical trials at the time," he recalls. "I wish she had the options we have available now."

Today, as the Assistant Director of Study Activation at NYU Langone's Laura and Isaac Perlmutter Cancer Center, Dhanantwari is helping bring innovative and potentially life-saving cancer clinical trials to patients in need of new treatments.

Through a partnership with health information technology company Essex Management, NYU Perlmutter activated over 100 clinical trials over the last year – despite most of the staff having to transition to remote work because of Covid-19.

To celebrate this vital and ground-breaking work, we are pleased to honor [NYU Perlmutter Cancer Center](#) and [Essex Management](#) with the [Team '21 Best in Class \(Non-Technical\) Award](#).

Breakthrough discoveries

Three years ago, Dhanantwari's mother's cancer returned and metastasized to her bones. "My immediate thought was that I needed to bring her over to NYU, knowing we have so many clinical trials available and our oncologists would certainly be able to review all the best options for her," he says.

NYU's Perlmutter Cancer Center's Clinical Trials Office oversees studies from inception to implementation. In the clinical trial ecosystem, time is critical. Breakthrough treatment discoveries that emerge from clinical trials can save lives.



RELATED ARTICLE

[Here's how our Team of the Year is supporting sub-Saharan farmers through the pandemic](#)

BY [JULISSA TREVIÑO](#) IN [TEAMWORK](#)

“Decreasing study activation timelines is a perpetual holy grail of research organizations. The process to activate a new cancer study is complex and lengthy, taking from 60-150 days or longer to complete,” says Paul Davis, Director of Business Process Automation for Essex Management. “It involves completing dozens of discrete tasks across multiple internal and external service delivery groups and stakeholders.”

Davis was already supporting clinical trials at Perlmutter for two other initiatives when he found himself fielding requests for additional features related to cancer-study activation. He decided to use Jira and Confluence to model the study activation process from beginning to end to identify ways to streamline operations.

Building for non-technical teams

One of the unknowns going into the project was how non-technical internal team members and external service providers would adapt to the Jira and Confluence platforms since they hadn't been using them before.

However, the newly named “em-PACT” solution was successfully adopted by the Clinical Trials Office and their supporting service providers within three months. To date, it’s been used to activate nearly 300 cancer studies. Most impressively, in the first year of use, the Clinical Trials Office saw a 26% decrease in the clinical study activation timeline and a 20% increase in staff satisfaction with the activation process.

“What helped our collaboration was that Paul didn’t try to mold us to the software,” says Dhanantwari. “He spent the time studying our processes and shaped the system design in a way that matched up with our processes as much as possible.”



RELATED ARTICLE

[On a merciful mission](#)

BY [JONATHAN THOMPSON](#) IN [TEAMWORK](#)

Massive documentation requirements add to the burden of starting a study. However, integrating the process into a universally visual and accessible platform set the foundation for success. The benefits of having every study in one system, showing real-time progress towards activating a study, allowed the Clinical Trials Office team to focus on managing the process of starting new studies rather than chasing down the most current status. “Weekly status meetings shifted from time-consuming updates to focusing on resolving critical issues,” says Dhanantwari.

“Jira allows our team to track and anticipate any potential bottlenecks throughout the study start-up process,” says Jennifer Tiao, the Clinical Trials Office’s Research Regulatory Manager. “For example, there was a time we were experiencing delays in receiving feasibility evaluations from our ancillary review teams for new clinical trials. By being able to see this piece, it fostered important communication between Clinical Trials Office leadership and the review-team leadership to strategize and coordinate the best solution possible.”

“Our clinical trials staff are very mission-driven. We emphasize that everyone plays a role in ensuring our patients get access to the most cutting-edge clinical trials,” says Tim Strawderman, Executive Director and Administrator at NYU’s Perlmutter Cancer Center. “My greatest joy comes from seeing teams work together to solve problems – especially true in our clinical trials office where there are many roadblocks to overcome in activating and opening clinical trials in a timely manner.” Tim points out that much of the credit for this platform goes to the former Administrative Director of the Clinical Trials Office, Erica Love. “She championed the platform with executive and institutional leadership, which was key in its implementation.”

Recognition as a top provider

Not long after implementing “em-PACT,” the Perlmutter Cancer Center was chosen to be one of 51 [National Cancer Institute \(NCI\)-designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers](#). This recognition of excellence – the highest ranking awarded by NCI – recognizes cancer centers for their improved survival rate, access to clinical trials and new treatments, and multidisciplinary approach to care.

Dhanantwari’s mother is still receiving care at the Perlmutter Cancer Centers. “Even after dealing with everything she has, my mom is still incredibly full of life,” says Dhanantwari. “Working in research and knowing about all these trials make me feel as if I’m not only part of her care, but also the care of many others. It’s what I’m most proud of with this job.”

SUBSCRIBE TO WORK LIFE

Get stories like this in your inbox

Subscribe

ABOUT THIS ARTICLE

Published May 7, 2021

Artwork by Sari Jack

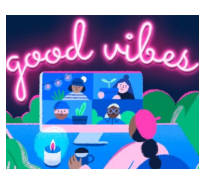
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

[LAVONNE ROBERTS](#)



RELATED CONTENT

More in ‘Teamwork’



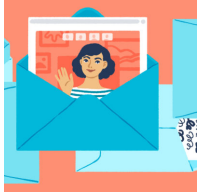
[TEAMWORK](#)

[Why our team has a Chief Vibes Officer – and yours should too](#)



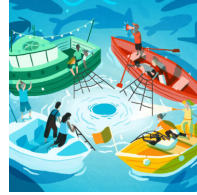
[PRODUCTIVITY](#)

[Scope creep isn't quite the enemy you think it is](#)



[TEAMWORK](#)

[5 email etiquette tips that just might change your life](#)



[TEAMWORK](#)

[Our team tried the 3 most popular work personality tests, and there was a clear winner](#)

MORE COLLECTIONS

COLLECTION

[Open Stories](#)

[With an Open mindset, teams can achieve great things. They can truly unleash their potential. But what does Open really mean? It's not about the type of office or the perks of the job. It's not even about the tools you use - although they help. Truly Open work is a frame of mind. It is the willingness to share your point of view, and listen to the point of view of others.](#)

[VIEW COLLECTION](#)

COLLECTION

[Bring Your Full Self to Work](#)

[Teams are made up of individuals, and they function best when each member is happy, healthy, and productive. These stories will show you how to grow your skills, make your own path, and become the best version of yourself.](#)

[VIEW COLLECTION](#)

COLLECTION

[Communicate the Workplace](#)

[Crossed wires and missed communication among team members can lead to frustration and inefficiency. Get better sound advice on how to create a culture of communication and work together better.](#)

[VIEW COLLECTION](#)

JOIN OVER 50,000 WORKING PROFESSIONALS

WORK LIFE

By  ATLISSIAN

Culture, tech, teams, and tips, delivered twice a month

[Sign me up!](#)

[Atlassian.com](#) [Terms of Use](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Copyright © 2022 Atlassian](#)