

EORTC principles for investigational sites activation

POL018

Version 1.0

(Always refer to the Intranet to check the validity of this document)

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1. Objectives

The objective of this policy is to describe the principles for investigational site participation to EORTC studies. It defines the guidelines by which EORTC will grant authorization to sites to join a particular study and to monitor site activities until the first patient is included. Alongside these principles, it defines the level of authority and decisions which can be taken towards non performing sites early on in the process of study activation. The process of getting a clinical trial up and running is considered to be a limiting factor for the compliance to the over all expected time lines. The steps to bring all sites on board for a clinical trial are multifold and complex to be achieved simultaneously. These steps are at the corner of project management, data management, regulatory and ethical procedures. Improvement in the efficiency of the start up of clinical trials requires the dedication of all involved parties. These steps which require optimal coordination deserve full attention and cooperation from the joining investigational sites.

2. Definitions

Interest form:	first notification and call for interest and site feasibility to the EORTC Group members.
Commitment form:	formal commitment of the site for participation into the clinical trial.
Initiation package:	documents sent / requested to the site for local site set-up.
Site authorization process:	process from commitment form signature until site clearance for patient entry.

3. Background

Extensive regulatory work is nowadays to be performed to activate countries and sites to join a clinical trial. The administrative process and compliance is now strictly regulated in EU member states since the implementation of the European directive 2001/20/EC. The complex regulatory procedures do have a direct cost to be achieved and executed but also submission costs to competent/regulatory bodies are more the rule than the exception. Insurance costs have also risen. In some countries, absence of patient entry within 1 year of study authorization will lead to authoritative closure of the trial by the competent authorities. Taking all this environment into account, EORTC has implemented a specific process to control as closely as possible the activation of sites. This policy is supported by detailed specific EORTC Working Procedures.

4. Process

4.1. Call for Interest

Preliminary participation and feasibility will be done by circulation of the outline document to the relevant EORTC site network with request to complete the FO1110 "Interest form".

The interest form will capture study population / trial process specific information in order to have an objective assessment of the feasibility per site. The interest form must be returned within 2 weeks to the EORTC Data Center. An extension of maximum 2 weeks will be considered.

Sites returning the interest form after the deadline will be logged on a waiting list. Depending on the expected and documented feasibility they might be taken on board from the start or at later stage to replace sites not fulfilling activation procedures adequately.

This first step, though preliminary is critical as it will serve for the initial budget assumption to run the study. Deviation by more than 10% should lead to budget re-evaluation.

4.2. Commitment to trial participation

After PRC approval of the full protocol, sites identified as participants based on the interest form will receive a “Commitment Form” and the full protocol. The signed commitment form must be returned within 3 weeks to the EORTC Data Center. An extension of maximum 3 weeks can be considered.

Sites not replying within the deadlines for return of the “commitment form” will be considered as “no longer interested” and will be replaced by sites from the waiting list. This step allows confirmation of site participation and triggers clinical trial insurance requests.

Sites in good standing with the previous step will receive the initiation package to proceed to local submissions as relevant.

4.3. Initiation package

The initiation package contains a number of documents and requests to be fulfilled by the sites before authorization to enter patients is given.

The Data Center will follow-up on the local process at each institution at 2 months after initiation package distribution and will issue a reminder. If deemed necessary, an additional reminder can be issued 4 months after initiation package distribution.

Failure at 6 months after receipt of the initiation package to provide complete and thorough information or to show that the process is actively addressed will lead to site interruption and replacement by a site on the waiting list.

4.4. Site activation

Once sites are authorized, entry of the first patient is closely followed up by the EORTC Data Center.

In absence of patient recruitment at 3 months after authorization, the Data Center will investigate if any limiting factor can be actively addressed to overcome recruitment difficulties.

At month 6 from authorization, sites failing to prove that adequate screening procedures are in place and not documenting recruitment failure will be considered no longer interested and will be closed to patient entry and replaced by sites on the waiting list.

It is important to note that replacing sites is not only a costly process, but also creates substantial administrative burden (substantial amendment).

If site replacement should exceed 25%, a complete study feasibility re-assessment and budget re-evaluation is recommended.

While the decision to close sites will always be looked at on a case by case approach jointly with the relevant EORTC network/group officers, the EORTC reserves the right not to activate a site which is the only site in a given country unless a clear motivation and past commitment data are available.

4.5. Summary of the timelines used at EORTC to monitor site activation process

	Aim of the process	Initial deadline	Last deadline
Interest form	Initial feasibility based on study outline	2 weeks	2 additional weeks
Commitment form	Confirmation of participation , initial regulatory steps	3 weeks	3 additional weeks
Initiation packages	Full scientific and regulatory packages for local procedures	2 months	6 months
1 st patient included	Control study timelines	3 months	6 months