Tracking trainees to Success

Linda Kupfer PhD, Ramkripa Raghavan MPH, MSc
Fogarty International Center
National Institutes of Health
kupferl@mail.nih.gov, raghavar@mail.nih.gov

Fogarty International Center (FIC), NIH is a pioneer in the field of international research capacity building. FIC has been funding global health research and training programs focused on low and middle income countries for more than two decades. FIC’s training programs have significantly contributed to the growth of a worldwide community of global health scientists who have made remarkable advances and discoveries and become leaders in the global research enterprise. Despite this fact, there is currently no system in place to allow FIC to conduct long-term tracking of the careers of its trainees across grants and programs. There is a similar need and keen interest from FIC grantees to have a system that will serve as a repository for all their trainees in order to track their career paths. This overwhelming call to track the career trajectory of FIC trainees has resulted in the origination of an innovative web-based tool – CareerTrac (https://careertrac.fic.nih.gov).

CareerTrac is an online application that is used to collect, track and report qualitative and quantitative information on trainees that are funded by FIC. This first of its kind system was developed as a tool for:

- FIC staff to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of its health research training programs
- FIC grantees to track their trainees and use the information in progress reports and when applying for other grants.

Presently, the CareerTrac application is being populated by grantees with current trainees. In the future it is envisioned that the system will be opened to the trainees themselves, to enter data and retrieve reports. FIC grantees enter both qualitative and quantitative information on their trainees including: trainee’s contact, biographical and training information, accomplishments – such as fellowships, awards, employment, education, publications, funding received, and posters at scientific conference etc. Fogarty has also entered historical data of 2000 trainees into the system. The data for the historical trainees will have to be verified by current grantees over the next year or so.

![Summary of degree types by Country](Image)
Apart from collecting information, CareerTrac can also generate a variety of reports such as – trainee’s career highlights, their role in product or policy development, honors/awards conferred, leadership roles and publication summary, to name a few. Figure 1 (on page 1) provides a snapshot of report generated through CareerTrac.

The data obtained through CareerTrac is invaluable for FIC and it informs FIC leadership to make suitable policy decisions. For example, CareerTrac data highlighted that there are very few trainees from Middle East & North African region and this has driven FIC to rethink strategies to improve training grant funding to the Middle East region. Apart from the quantitative data, CareerTrac also collects qualitative information on the trainees that are otherwise hard to collect. The following snippet sheds light on how the FIC program has helped this trainee’s career – “Dr. Jane Doe* has gained considerable amount of knowledge in Survey methodology as a result of her FIC Research training. This knowledge has allowed her to effectively lead NICHD funded project”. In addition to tracking trainee’s accomplishments, the data from CareerTrac will be used to evaluate the success and impact of FIC’s training programs and develop metrics and benchmarks for the programs. These metrics and benchmarks will allow FIC to better compare its programs with each other and with other global health training programs.
* - Anonymized to protect the trainee’s identity