

Strengthening Clinical Research Network Collaboration and Community Health Center
Participation in PCORnet® Studies

Hosted by the **ADVANCE Clinical Research Network**
Portland, OR
September 26, 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

On September 26, 2025, the ADVANCE Clinical Research Network (CRN) hosted an event aimed at introducing researchers—particularly those with limited prior exposure to PCORnet®—to the network’s resources and opportunities. The event sought to raise awareness of PCORnet and spark new collaborations.

This event was held in Portland, Oregon, and convened 114 researchers (73 in-person, 41 virtual) from 36 institutions, representing 7 of the 8 PCORnet® CRNs. The morning sessions featured a welcome and orientation, an overview of PCORnet, insights into PCORI funding announcements, and presentations from three researchers sharing their experiences leading PCORnet® Studies. In the afternoon, a panel of Patient Partners and health center representatives offered valuable perspectives on conducting research that is responsive to both patient and community health center needs. The day concluded with highlights from two PCORnet workgroups and Population Insights Reports¹, followed by an interactive discussion exploring how the PCORnet infrastructure can support research in these areas.

WELCOME AND OVERVIEW

ADVANCE Principal Investigators Drs. Erika Cottrell and Wyatt Bensken opened the event by welcoming attendees and acknowledging the strong representation from academic institutions along the West Coast. They emphasized ADVANCE’s unique position as a CRN focused on community-based primary care, setting the tone for a day centered on inclusive, patient-centered health research.

Attendees were encouraged to actively participate, ask questions, and build connections throughout the day. The format was intentionally interactive, with dedicated time for open discussion and networking to promote meaningful engagement.

MEETING OBJECTIVES

The event was guided by two primary objectives: (1) promote understanding of PCORnet resources—including the infrastructure, capabilities, and research opportunities—particularly among researchers new to PCORnet; (2) encourage cross-network collaboration, especially among different PCORnet® CRNs, with the long-term aim of expanding leadership and participation in PCORnet® Studies.

¹ Population Insights Reports are topical “snapshots” of data available across the network, stratified by demographics, geographics, and care setting type.

Unique Features of the Meeting:

- **Focus on Community Health Centers (CHCs) and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs):** ADVANCE, led by OCHIN, draws its data primarily from community health centers, federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), and “FQHC look-alikes.” This unique strength was highlighted throughout the event, with attendees hearing directly from health center staff who shared insights into the needs and priorities of their patient communities.
- **Patient Engagement Panel Perspectives:** Members of the OCHIN-ADVANCE Patient Engagement Panel—individuals with lived experience who advise on research practices—shared powerful reflections on how researchers can center patients in their work. One memorable quote underscored the importance of humility and openness: *“Researchers have to be ready to be uncomfortable.”*
- **Recommendations from Health Center Leaders:** Dr. Thu Quach, President of Asian Health Services in Oakland, CA, emphasized the importance of cultural competency, trust-building, and the use of disaggregated data to better understand the diverse health needs of Asian subgroups. Her insights reinforced the need for nuanced, community-informed approaches to research.

DISCUSSION

PCORnet: Overview and How to Engage

This session introduced attendees to PCORnet. PCORnet is a national resource, funded by PCORI, that enables insights from high-quality health data, patient partnership, and research expertise to deliver fast, trustworthy answers that advance health outcomes.

Research Opportunities: PCORI, Federal, Industry, and Beyond

This session clarified a common misconception: PCORnet[®] Studies are not limited to PCORI funding. Attendees learned about a range of funding mechanisms, including PCORI’s, and how the PCORnet infrastructure can streamline and support clinical research.

Research Powered by PCORnet[®]: This session highlighted three PCORnet[®] Studies showcasing diverse research designs and engagement strategies. Presenters discussed the [COMPARE](#) study studying pediatric inflammatory bowel disease, [PREVENTABLE](#) studying health cognitive aging, and the [EQUITABLE](#) study on asthma care in Latino adults, all leveraging the PCORnet[®] Common Data Model. The PCORnet[®] Study [ACTIV-6](#) was discussed as an example of a decentralized trial that leverages the community of PCORnet and its CRNs but does not require the PCORnet[®] Common Data Model. Emphasis was placed on patient and health community engagement, team science, and opportunities for early-career researchers for all PCORnet research. More information about PCORnet[®] Studies is available here <https://pcornet.org/studies/>.

Health Center and Patient Partner Perspectives on Research: This session featured insights from three health center staff and three patient advisors who shared their perspectives on the value of research. They emphasized why research matters to their communities and how

incorporating patient and frontline viewpoints strengthens the relevance, design, and sustainability of research efforts. Both patients and health center representatives recommended engagement best practices, including:

- Early and frequent involvement of clinics and patients, even before funding;
- Regular, informal meetings to help researchers stay aligned with clinic priorities;
- Clear expectations for community participants;
- Choosing safe spaces like local community centers for outreach and recruitment; and
- Use of Patient Partners

Leveraging PCORnet for community-based primary care research: This session offered practical guidance on initiating collaborations through the [PCORnet[®] Front Door](#), navigating budgeting and contracting processes, and accessing support resources. The discussion emphasized how the PCORnet infrastructure can be a powerful tool for advancing research in community-based primary care settings.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The PCORnet event was a dynamic and engaging meeting designed to introduce researchers to data, research, and engagement resources that are available through PCORnet. Throughout the day, the event emphasized how the infrastructure supports streamlined and efficient CER, with a particular focus on ADVANCE's leadership in community-based primary care. Attendees gained practical insights into engaging with PCORnet via the PCORnet[®] Front Door, heard directly from patients and providers, and explored opportunities for future research collaboration across CRNs participating in PCORnet.

Key Questions Answered

Several foundational questions were addressed during the meeting. Participants learned that while electronic health record data can enhance research, it is not a prerequisite; the infrastructure supports a variety of study models, including data-only and decentralized approaches. The event also highlighted pathways for early-career researchers, emphasizing the commitment of the PCORnet[®] Network Partners to team science and support for individuals to grow from site-level collaborators to study leaders. Additionally, the sessions reinforced the importance of patient and community engagement, streamlined contracting processes, and the availability of tools such as feasibility queries and the PCORnet[®] Front Door to initiate and support collaborations.

Laying The Foundation for Research Opportunities

The discussions throughout the day laid a strong foundation for future research collaborations using the PCORnet infrastructure. Promising directions included leveraging school-based health centers for pediatric care and addiction prevention, exploring innovative strategies for chronic disease management, and examining how patient-provider dynamics influence health outcomes. Health center staff and Patient Partners also identified key priorities such as improving mental health care access for Asian American communities, evaluating value-based care models, and operationalizing health justice missions by addressing social drivers of health.

Appendix I: Meeting Agenda

Strengthening Clinical Research Network Collaboration and Community Health Center Participation in PCORnet® Studies

Title	Time (PT)	Presenter
Check In and Optional Breakfast	8:00 – 8:30	
Welcome and Opening Remarks	8:30 – 9:15	Erika Cottrell , ADVANCE Principal Investigator & Wyatt Bensken , ADVANCE Co-Investigator
PCORnet: Overview and How to Engage	9:15 – 10:00	Adrian Hernandez , Vice Dean and Executive Director at Duke Clinical Research Institute, Principal Investigator of Coordinating Center for PCORnet® Lauren Cohen , Associate Director of Duke Clinical Research Institute, Program Director of Coordinating Center for PCORnet®
Research Opportunities: PCORI, Industry, Others	10:00 – 10:45	Adrian Hernandez , Vice Dean and Executive Director at Duke Clinical Research Institute, Principal Investigator of Coordinating Center for PCORnet® Mike Mead , PCORI Program Officer
Break	10:45 – 11:05	
Conducting research in PCORnet®: From observational studies to pragmatic trials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COMPARE, Michael Kappelman • ACTIV-6, Adrian Hernandez • EQUITABLE, John Heintzman 	11:05 – 12:25	Michael Kappelman , Principal Investigator of COMPARE, Professor of Pediatrics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Adrian Hernandez , Vice Dean and Executive Director of Duke Clinical Research Institute, Principal Investigator of Coordinating Center for PCORnet® John Heintzman , Principal Investigator I of EQUITABLE, Professor of Family Medicine at Oregon Health & Science University
Networking Lunch	12:25 – 1:25	
Health center and patient partner perspectives on research: Impacts, best practices, and vision	1:30 – 2:40	Health Center Representatives and Patient Partners
Leveraging PCORnet for community-based primary care research: Priority topics and resources	2:45 – 3:45	Attendee discussion
Wrap-up and next steps	3:45 – 4:00	