A Checklist for Good TMF Health

Authors: Amruta Patil and Eva Matheu, TMF Consultants, TransPerfect Life Sciences

The Trial Master File (TMF) serves as the primary source of documentation and plays a significant role in ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements and demonstrating the integrity of a clinical trial. The key attributes of good TMF health are completeness, timeliness, and quality.

The TMF should contain all the documents required by regulatory authorities and Good Clinical Practice (GCP) guidelines. This includes among others the protocol, investigator brochures, informed consent forms, case report forms, monitoring reports, and correspondence with regulatory bodies.

In this concise guide, you will find a collection of critical considerations to assist you in ensuring the health of your TMF. Each element addressed here will support the timeliness, completeness, and overall quality of your TMF, aligning with industry standards and best practices.

This guide will help you focus on some important considerations to ensure the good health of your TMF:

1. Do you have a robust TMF SOP?

A good TMF SOP is imperative in defining and documenting your TMF management process, from setup, maintenance and oversight to TMF close out and archive of both paper and/or electronic TMFs.

2. Do you have trial-specific TMF Plans?

TMF plans describe how TMF records for the trial will be managed and stored, including study-specific processes and documentation for archiving and destruction. The CDISC TMF Reference model released a new version template for industry use: https://tmfrefmodel.com/download/4789/?tmstv=1667384522

3. Are you using the CDISC TMF Reference Model?

EMA Guidance on the TMF states “There should be a suitable overall index or table of contents to enable the location of essential documents in the TMF to be traced.” The CDISC TMF Reference Model provides standardized taxonomy and metadata and outlines a reference definition of TMF content using standard terminology. The latest version 3.3 was released on March 31 this year: https://tmfrefmodel.com/download/5034/?tmstv=1684330814

4. Do you have a document submission best practice outlined?

Having strong document submission guidelines is one important strategy in ensuring a complete, contemporaneous, and high-quality TMF. Having document submitters check for correct file names, that a copy hasn't already been filed, and has been adequately redacted where applicable for example will mean documents are indexed and QC'd the first time with no queries or rejections.

5. Do you have a defined timeline for document submissions?

The TMF should have all documentation from all TMF stakeholders added in a timely manner, as this supports the successful management of a clinical trial. The timelines for submission and filing of all documents to the TMF should be defined and is particularly important for more composite TMFs with multiple parties involved.

6. With eTMFs, do you leverage AI for automated document indexing?

AI-powered eTMF technology empowers every TMF stakeholder to be more compliant. Streamlining eTMF document processing and quality control, automated metadata extraction and indexing workflows powered by machine learning can provide more than 98% TMF accuracy.

The CDISC TMF Reference Model provides a single, unified interpretation of the regulations via a document listing widely accepted as the defector standard across the industry.

7. Do you have a robust QC workflow in place for documents submitted to the TMF?

There are a number of considerations to have in mind when configuring workflows to ensure a high-quality TMF. Who will ensure that all expected documents are filed? Is a 100% check of all documents required or can the check be risk-based? Will a periodic TMF review be performed in addition to document QC checks performed before finalization? The answers to these questions will help you decide how to set up your quality control program.

8. Do you leverage milestones and events to measure completeness?

It is important to have a simple way to recognize clinical milestones and events as they happen in order to get the most accurate picture of eTMF Health. That way, as events such as database lock or protocol amendments and other activities occur, the eTMF 'knows' what documents are needed in association with those events and can even play for them automatically.

9. For eTMFs, do you utilize metrics and reports?

Metrics are intended to provide an overview of what is valuable to measure. With the TMF we know that completeness, timeliness, and quality are measures of good health so metrics such as percentage completeness, percent of documents received and finalized by due dates, and percentage of documents where an error is identified are excellent metrics to be utilized.

10. Do you utilize Study Storyboards?

Storyboards can be powerful tools to aid inspection readiness, especially for companies that don't utilize other eClinical technologies such as Clinical Trial Management Systems (CTMS) that manage all operational aspects of trials, or where trials are outsourced to multiple CROs. Storyboards although usually quite high level, should tell a complete quality story for every issue in the trial. They are also useful in summarizing the study's story with key information and important decisions made that help with sponsor oversight.

BONUS TIP:

With eTMFs, do you leverage AI for automated document indexing?

AI-powered eTMF technology empowers every TMF stakeholder to be more compliant. Streamlining eTMF document processing and quality control, automated metadata extraction, and indexing workflows powered by machine learning can provide more than 98% TMF accuracy.

By addressing these considerations and adopting industry best practices, organizations can effectively uphold a well-structured, all-encompassing, and compliant trial master file. This approach will help facilitate successful clinical trial management and safeguard the reliability and integrity of the trial data, fostering a foundation of credibility in the research process.

The health of your TMF is important. In fact, 85% of studies are delayed and inspection findings are often a factor. You can calculate your TMF Inspection Risk Score and know how to improve it in less than 10 minutes by taking this quiz. https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LHDKWT3

These pillars will ensure you will be able to run the TMF proactively and if you want to learn more about the health of your TMF reach out to us at **info@trialinteractive.com**.