Centers on Telehealth Research and Cancer-Related Care (RFA Concept)

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The Potential of Telehealth in Care Delivery

A doctor's diagnosis "by radio" on the cover of Science and Invention magazine (Feb 1925)

Current Expectations

Opportunity for Telehealth Adoption due to COVID-19

- With the pandemic, in-person care delivery has rapidly transitioned to telehealth
  - Increased use in primary care, specialty care, and oncology settings
  - Virtual visits reimbursed equivalent to in-person visit

- Opportunity to improve cancer care by researching telehealth approaches
  - Foster research examining new tools, methods, and technology
  - Address processes and outcomes of cancer-related care
  - Identify unique needs and opportunities to serve traditionally underserved populations
  - Assess telehealth's sustained utility, post COVID-19

- RFI released July 2020 to solicit stakeholder input, almost 50 submissions

What is Needed

Rapid development of a telehealth-focused evidence base across the cancer care continuum, highlighting:

- Telehealth as a modality of cancer care delivery

- Large, pragmatic trials to establish evidence-based telehealth practices in cancer-specific areas of need

- Innovative technology and research methods

- Explicit focus on access and equity

Centers on Telehealth Research and Cancer-Related Care: Goals
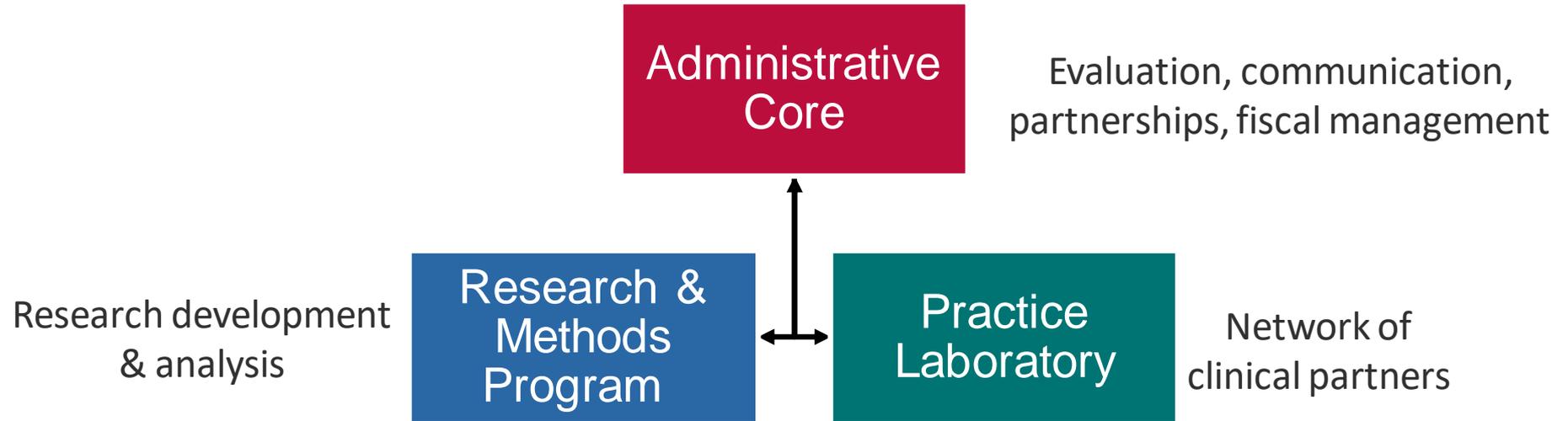
Leverage the P50 mechanism to:

1. Create national centers for advancing cancer-related telehealth research in a rapidly changing care environment

2. Establish a robust evidence base for patient-centered, sustainable telehealth models of cancer care delivery

3. Foster the development, evaluation, and dissemination of evidence-based models of cancer-focused telehealth
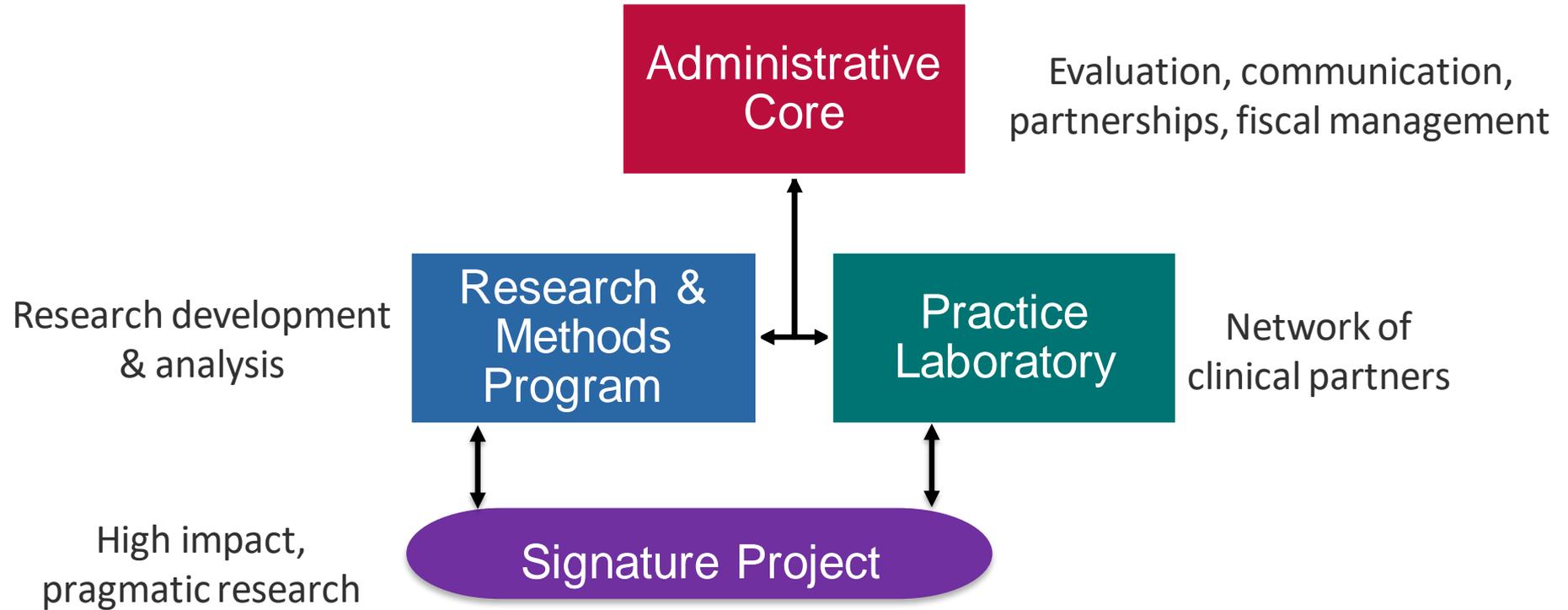
Expected Contributions to Advance Telehealth and Cancer

- Focus on patient-provider synchronous telehealth

- Stated goals related to access and equity

- Each Research Center will propose an overarching research theme that must address a high-priority cancer care delivery research need
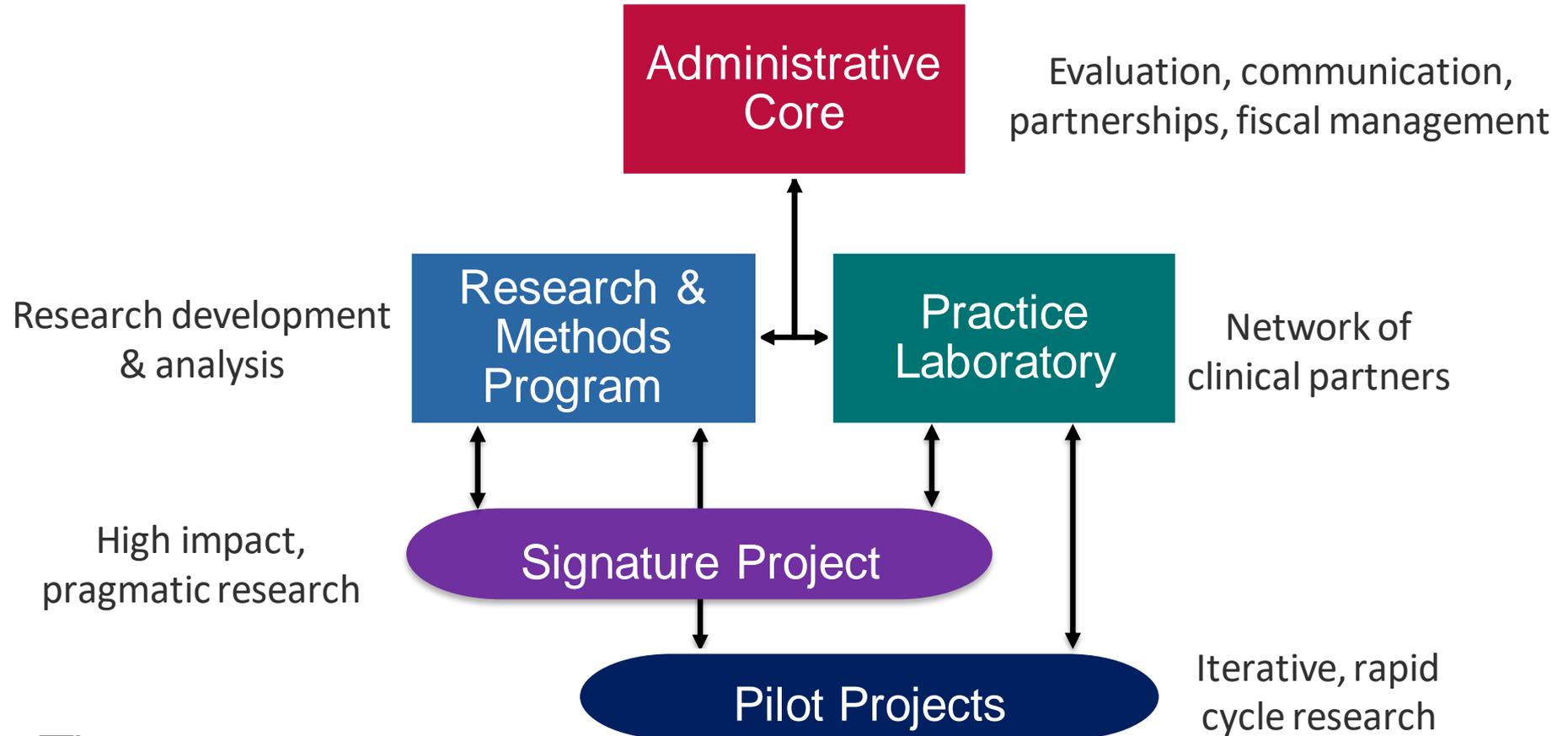
Research Centers: Design Overview (Structure)

Administrative Core

Evaluation, communication, partnerships, fiscal management

Research development & analysis

Research & Methods Program

Practice Laboratory

Network of clinical partners

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Signature Project

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Signature Project

High impact, pragmatic research

Pilot Projects

Iterative, rapid cycle research

Example: Patient-Centered Communication in Cancer Care

Signature Project:

- Telehealth communication skills training for patients and providers
- Expected outcomes: Improvements in patient/provider communication, quality of care, utilization of cancer-related care (e.g., receipt of adjuvant therapy, reductions in re-hospitalization and ED visits)

Pilot Projects:

- Approaches to engage patients with low digital literacy (e.g., engaging cancer caregivers and/or family members)
- Optimal utilization of patient-generated data (e.g., ePROs, adverse events, activity monitors during telehealth visit)

Summary of Telehealth and Cancer Centers Initiative

- Leverages an unprecedented opportunity to build an evidence base for use of telehealth across all aspects of cancer care delivery

- Research has the potential to improve access and equity, care quality, and health outcomes across the cancer care continuum

- Costs: $1.4M total costs per center per year, 3 centers are planned

- Built-in flexibility for policy and technology changes

- Opportunity to promote innovative approaches to address long-standing cancer care delivery challenges and related health disparities

- Creation of a national collaboratory at the forefront of cancer-related telehealth research

BSA Sub-Committee Feedback

- **Clearly highlight key cancer-specific telehealth areas of need**

  - The RFA will prominently highlight the expectation for centers to address: (1) high-priority cancer-specific telehealth applications and (2) assessment of cancer-focused outcomes

- **Emphasize an expectation that Research Centers will be expected to monitor and adapt to health policy changes**

  - The RFA will highlight the expectation that applicants should describe their strategies for monitoring and adapting to changes in health policy over the award period

- **More strongly encourage Research Centers to work together**

  - The RFA language will emphasize the need for trans-center collaborations, sharing of best practices, and dissemination activities

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