EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN YOUR STUDY PARTICIPANTS.

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INTRODUCTION

Recruitment and retention of research participants is at the heart of research. The research project can have excellent medical merit but, without data generated from participants, no clear benefit can be proven. We identify challenges to recruiting and retaining research participants and offer strategies to address these challenges.

BACKGROUND

Recruitment for clinical trials can be challenging. Fully engaged principal investigators (PIs) are an asset; however, not all PIs have the time to identify potential participants and start the research conversation. Additionally, other healthcare professionals are not always educated about the study or the type of patient needed for it. Therefore, study coordinators must be prepared to find and screen patients on their own. Successful enrollment of participants is no guarantee that they will remain throughout the study period. They may miss appointments or drop out, becoming "lost to follow-up" and contributing nothing to the study outcome data.

Recruitment Strategies

- PI/ physician recommendations
- Laboratory queries for specific test result(s)
- Staff education – inpatient unit and office
- Retrospective EMR reports/ searches
- Real-time ER monitoring
- Pre-admission testing schedule
- Hospital admissions report
- Sponsor-supplied media placement
- Poster with inclusion criteria/ contact info
- Pharmacy queries for specific drug(s)
- Ancillary services monitoring (e.g., radiology, lab)
- Engagement of other research personnel

Retention Strategies

- Visits to enrolled inpatients daily until discharge
- Tracking of hospital admissions or ER visits
- Reminder calls the day before outpatient research visits
- Designated location to meet/escort first-visit patients
- Quiet, private location in research office for consent
- Full disclosure of expectations of patient as participant
- Coordination of research-related procedures
- Research phlebotomists designated for lab work
- Visit customization to meet patient needs
- Reminder cards at visit for next research appointment
- Awareness of patients' personal and family issues
- Sponsor negotiation for patient stipends
- Expressed appreciation of participants

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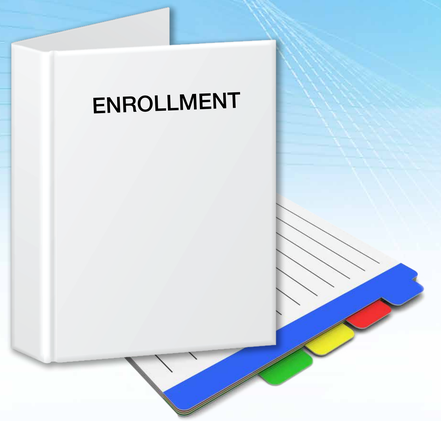
ENROLLMENT

Creating an enrollment binder can make the consent process go smoothly.

Enrollment binder should contain:

- Current copy of the protocol
- Study personnel contact information
- Detailed enrollment instructions
- Inclusion/ exclusion check sheet
- Information for the participant
- Source documents



CONCLUSION

Research subjects are special people who participate in research voluntarily—often despite a degree of risk—donating their bodies and their time to improve healthcare for everyone. They deserve extra consideration to welcome and retain them as valuable members of the research team.