Research Professionals’ Experience and Perspectives on Women’s Participation in Clinical Research

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Despite continued focus and federal funding requisites, significant gender and racial disparities persist in clinical research participation. Although understanding regarding research professionals’ perspectives about barriers to minority participation remains understudied.

Background

Out of 13,541 recipients, only 1,007 (7.4%) responded. After excluding those 374 who were not involved in enrolling patients, 633 women (7 questions each) on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (score=1) to “strongly agree” (score=5).

Fear of unknown side-effects and unavailability for follow-up visits were the most significant perceived patient barriers to women’s participation, both with a median score of “4” (IQR=1) (Table 2a). Respondents were neither hesitant nor listed any factor as significant barrier to enrolling women (all with a median score of “1,” IQR=1) (Table 2b).

Women over child-bearing age were considered more likely to participate in research (median “3,” IQR=0). A majority indicated that DVDs demonstrating how to approach female candidates might be useful in enrolment training (median “3,” IQR=1) (Table 3).

Research professionals perceive that women over child-bearing age are more likely to participate in clinical research than younger women. Although they expressed no hesitation in approaching women for participation, a majority responded that DVDs demonstrating how to approach women for research might improve their comfort with enrolling women.

Methods

We conducted an anonymous and voluntary nationwide survey of research professionals whose institution received NIH and/or AHRQ funding in 2013 to conduct clinical research. Research professionals were surveyed regarding factors perceived as barriers deterring women from participation versus factors deterring research professionals from enrolling them (7 questions each) on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (score=1) to “strongly agree” (score=5).

Investigator bias has a tangible effect on female enrollment remains understudied.

Hypothesis

To identify research professionals’ attitudes, barriers and potential facilitators to enrolling women in clinical research.

Results

What is your gender?

Male

Female

Table 1: Demographics of the Respondents

Table 2a. Research Professionals’ Opinion on What Discourages Women from Participating?

Table 2b. What Discourages Research Professionals from Enrolling Women?

Table 3. Research Professionals’ Observations regarding Female Participants’ Age and Recommendations for Helpful Tools to Boost Their Comfort Level in Enrolling Women

Conclusion

Investigator bias has a tangible effect on female

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Background

Despite continued focus and federal funding requisites, significant gender and racial disparities persist in clinical research participation. Although understanding regarding research professionals’ perspectives about barriers to minority participation has improved, their perspective regarding women’s enrollment remains understudied.

Objective

To identify research professionals’ attitudes, barriers and potential facilitators to enrolling women in clinical research.

Hypothesis

Investigator bias has a tangible effect on female

Results

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Research professionals perceive that women over child-bearing age are more likely to participate in clinical research than younger women. Although they expressed no hesitation in approaching women for participation, a majority responded that DVDs demonstrating how to approach women for research might improve their comfort with enrolling women.

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Acknowledgement:

Grant funded by the Anne and Carl Anderson Trust, a non-profit, philanthropic trust.

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