

Please see below for a link to the webinar recording for the Trials Methodology Research Partnership:

Recruiting pregnant women to clinical trials: the ENCOUNTER study

Vivienne Hanrahan (National University of Ireland Galway)

14 April 2021

On behalf of the Health Research Board Trials Methodology Research Network

The slides are also available below.

For any queries, please contact uktmn@nottingham.ac.uk

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plxkXVX5seg>



OÉ Gaillimh
NUI Galway



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ENCOUNTER Study

rEcruiter's experieNce Of recrUiting
pregNant womEn to clinical tRIals

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#trialmethodology



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Outline

- Background
- Qualitative Evidence Synthesis
- Taking a Behavioural Approach
 - Specifying, Diagnosing and Treating the behaviour
- **ENCOUNTER preliminary findings**
- What's next?



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METHODOLOGY

Open Access



Identifying trial recruitment uncertainties using a James Lind Alliance Priority Setting Partnership – the PRioRiTty (Prioritising Recruitment in Randomised Trials) study

Patricia Healy^{1,2*}, Sandra Galvin^{1,2}, Paula R. Williamson³, Shaun Treweek⁴, Caroline Whiting⁵, Beccy Maeso⁵, Christopher Bray⁶, Peter Brocklehurst⁷, Mary Clarke Moloney⁸, Abdel Douiri⁹, Carrol Gamble³, Heidi R. Gardner⁴, Derick Mitchell¹⁰, Derek Stewart¹¹, Joan Jordan¹⁰, Martin O'Donnell^{1,12}, Mike Clarke^{1,13}, Sue H. Pavitt¹⁴, Eleanor Woodford Guegan¹⁵, Amanda Blatch-Jones¹⁵, Valerie Smith^{1,16}, Hannah Reay¹⁷ and Declan Devane^{1,2}

Abstract

Background: Despite the problem of inadequate recruitment to randomised trials, there is a lack of understanding of the barriers and enablers for clinicians/healthcare professionals in helping conduct randomised trials.

PRioRiTty Study Question 5

PRioRiTty

ABOUT PRIORITY I PRIORITY II QUESTION DEVELOPMENT QUESTION OVERLAP PUBLICATIONS CONTACT

Q1 How can randomised trials become part of routine care and best utilise current clinical care pathways?

Q2 What information should trialists communicate to members of the public who are being invited to take part in a randomised trial in order to improve recruitment to the trial?

Q3 Does patient/public involvement in planning a randomised trial improve recruitment?

Q4

Q5 What are the barriers and enablers for clinicians/healthcare professionals in helping conduct randomised trials?

Q6 What are the key motivators influencing members of the public's decisions to take part in a randomised trial?

Q8 What are the best ways to predict recruitment rates to a randomised trial and what impact do such predictions have on recruitment?

Q9 What are the best approaches to optimise the informed consent process to improve recruitment of members of the public to randomised trials?

Q5

What are the barriers and enablers for clinicians/healthcare professionals in helping conduct randomised trials?

Recruitment in pregnancy

What's different about it?

- Dyad of mother & baby offers an extra layer of complexity to the challenge of recruitment

Why does it matter?



HEALTH • COVID-19 VACCINE

Pregnant women aren't typically included in clinical trials, but that's changing with COVID

BY SY MUKHERJEE
March 19, 2021 8:15 PM GMT

VIEWPOINT Involving Pregnant Individuals in Clinical Research on COVID-19 Vaccines

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The continued global escalation of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases is of particular concern for pregnant and lactating individuals. While many cases of COVID-19 are asymptomatic or relatively mild, recent evidence suggests that pregnant people are at increased risk of hospitalization and have a 3-fold adjusted relative risk of needing intensive care (10.5 vs 3.9/1000 cases) and mechanical ventilation (2.9 vs 1.1/1000 cases) compared with age-matched nonpregnant individuals.¹ Pregnant people with laboratory-confirmed severe or critical COVID-19 disease have higher adjusted relative risks of cesarean delivery (1.57 [95% CI, 1.30-1.90]), postpartum hemorrhage (2.04 [95% CI, 1.19-3.44]), and stillbirth (1.64 [95% CI, 1.19-2.24]).²

These complications are older, have a medical comorbidity, and ethnic disparity in mortality among pregnant people with COVID-19.

Efforts have been provided for nonpregnant patients. Efforts by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the V-Safe registry³ as well as industry and the Food and Drug Administration will yield postmarket surveillance information from pregnant people, in addition to evidence on the effects of the vaccine on pregnancy and infant outcomes. These data will be useful in the meantime, pregnant people and their clinicians must make real-time decisions based on little scientific evidence.

As noted in 2016, when the Task Force on Research Specific to Pregnant Women and Lactating Women (PRGLAC) was established as part of the 21st Century Cures Act,⁴ there is a continuing need to address the knowledge and research related to the development of interventions for pregnant people.

JAMA The Journal of the American Medical Association

FORTUNE
WHAT COMES NEXT
For Business • For the Economy • For the Battle Against COVID-19



A pregnant woman attends a celebration in Caracas. Data show that pregnant women face increased risks from SARS-CoV-2.

HOW DOES COVID AFFECT MOTHER AND BABY?

Pregnant women fare worse than others, although the risks to the fetus are slight. By Nidhi Subbaraman

Yalda Afshar was about two months pregnant when reports of COVID-19 began to emerge in the United States in February last year. As an obstetrician managing high-risk pregnancies at the University of California, Los Angeles, Afshar knew that respiratory viruses are especially dangerous to pregnant women. There was very little data on the effects of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and, as cases racked up, she felt like she was flying blind, both while advising her patients and in navigating her own worries about contracting the virus and passing it on to her baby and family. But her situation also brought her closer to the women she was treating. "I had this sense of solidarity that I've not felt before," she says. "It was an inspiration to just work harder and try to get answers faster."

Afshar launched one of the first registries in the United States to track women who had tested positive for the virus during their pregnancy, working with colleagues from across the country to recruit and follow participants. More than a dozen similar projects launched over the course of 2020.

Now, more than a year into the pandemic, research from groups around the world has shown that pregnant women are at a higher risk of hospitalization and death than are women who are not pregnant. The rate of death is also higher in pregnant women in those in non-minority racial and ethnic groups.

The good news is that the situation in the wider population has improved. Pregnant women are not often getting sick. Samples from the placenta, the umbilical cord and blood from mothers and infants indicate that the virus rarely



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Inclusion of pregnant women in COVID-19 treatment trials: a review and global call to action



Melanie M Taylor, Loulou Kobeissi, Caron Kim, Avni Amin, Anna E Thorson, Nita B Bellare, Vanessa Brizuela, Mercedes Bonet, Edna Kara, Soe Soe Thwin, Hamsadvani Kuganatham, Moazzam Ali, Olufemi T Oladapo, Nathalie Broutet



Inclusion of pregnant women in COVID-19 treatment trials to improve maternal health, pregnancy, and birth outcomes for pregnant women. We explored the inclusion of pregnant women in international clinical trial registries at two time points: biological drugs for the April 7–10, 2020 time period and the same registry search for the July 10–15, 2020 time period.

“Without an explicit and proactive effort to recruit and retain pregnant women in clinical trials, the understanding of treatment effects, dosing, side-effects, and potential benefits of COVID-19 treatment for pregnant women will be limited. Inclusion of pregnant women is a matter of equity as much as efficacy and safety...”

Health Policy: Inclusion of pregnant women in COVID-19 treatment trials: a review and global call to action

Check for updates

Include pregnant women in research—particularly covid-19 research

Adapting interventions and changing attitudes will drive scientific progress

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Published: 25 August 2020

The UK Confidential Enquiries into Maternal Deaths have repeatedly highlighted inequities in the medical treatment of pregnant and postpartum women, noting that women are denied investigations and life preserving treatments simply because they are pregnant or breastfeeding.^{1,2} These inquiries emphasise that the default position should be to investigate and treat pregnant and breastfeeding women in the same way as non-pregnant women, unless there are clear reasons not to.¹

Clinical trials, particularly those of drug treatments, have typically automatically excluded pregnant or breastfeeding women, meaning data are unavailable on safety and effectiveness. These challenges were noted by the Task Force on Research Specific to Pregnant Women and Lactating Women,³ which issued 15 recommendations, centred around tackling the cultural assumptions that limit scientific progress into preventive and therapeutic interventions for pregnant women.

This disparity in trial inclusion has been exacerbated in the covid-19 pandemic. A recent review reported that of 927 trials related to covid-19, 52% explicitly excluded pregnancy, 46% did not mention pregnancy, and only 1.7% specifically included pregnancy, of which just three were interventional trials.⁴ The risks of untested interventions have been highlighted by others,⁵ and the moral imperative to include pregnant women in such trials is obvious,⁶ but the mechanisms to do so are less clear.

Dealing with safety concerns

The RECOVERY (Randomised Evaluation of Covid-19 Therapy) trial shows that excluding pregnant and breastfeeding women need not be the default option.⁷ Inclusion of these women in trials has challenges, and approaches developed for the RECOVERY trial provide a template for other studies.

or breastfeeding allows safety concerns to be addressed for women, their families, and healthcare professionals.

Even if regulatory barriers have been overcome gatekeeping or inertia may occur if local ethics committees take an overwhelming precautionary approach, overriding recognition of the potential benefits of including pregnant and breastfeeding women. This problem can be mitigated by a network of maternity researchers, familiar with delivering drug trials in pregnancy, who can rapidly mobilise to help implement studies.

The pressure on health services in the pandemic necessitates streamlined approaches to clinical research. The need to add data collection about pre-pregnancy and infant outcomes is perceived as a disincentive to inclusion of pregnant women. However, routinely collected information can ease the burden of additional data. If these data do not include sufficient clinical nuance to address key questions—such as decisions around mode of birth—additional linkage to data may provide a solution. The UK Surveillance System,⁹ part of an international network,¹⁰ facilitated rapid roll-out of observational studies of covid-19 in pregnancy designed before the pandemic in research that includes these extended data.

Changing the default

These examples show how some challenges caused by regulatory and other barriers can be overcome to include pregnant women even within a rapidly evolving landscape of increasing numbers of women are with pre-existing conditions and benefit from newer therapies, and the default to including, rather than excluding, is the better one.

Home > Health and social care > Research and innovation in health and social care > The future of UK clinical research delivery

Department of Health & Social Care

The Executive Office (Northern Ireland)

Scottish Government

Welsh Government

Policy paper

Saving and improving lives: the future of UK clinical research delivery

Published 23 March 2021

Contents

- Ministerial foreword
- The value of clinical research
- Our vision for UK clinical research delivery
- Our strategy and plans for delivery
- Where we go from here
- Next steps
- Case studies
- Glossary

Ministerial foreword

The past year has delivered unprecedented challenges for us all. But through these dark times, UK clinical research has provided a beacon of hope.

The tireless efforts of our healthcare professionals, researchers, participants, regulators, medical charities and industry have helped us to lead the world in COVID-19 research. From the rapid delivery of innovative platform trials, like RECOVERY, to our massive contribution to the global vaccine effort, our research ecosystem has pulled together across the UK to provide us with a route back to normality.

This is testament to our strengths. The UK has long been at the forefront



Qualitative Evidence Synthesis

PLOS ONE

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Recruiters' perspectives of recruiting women during pregnancy and childbirth to clinical trials: A qualitative evidence synthesis

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Abstract

Introduction

Research on research is key to enhancing efficacy in trial methodology. Clinical trials involving women during pregnancy and childbirth are limited, with a paucity of data guiding evidence-based practice. Following a prioritisation exercise that highlighted the top-ten unanswered recruitment questions, this qualitative evidence synthesis was designed specifically to focus on the barriers and enablers for clinicians/healthcare professionals in helping conduct randomised trials within the context of recruitment during pregnancy and childbirth.

Methods

The synthesis was undertaken using Thomas and Harden's three stage thematic synthesis

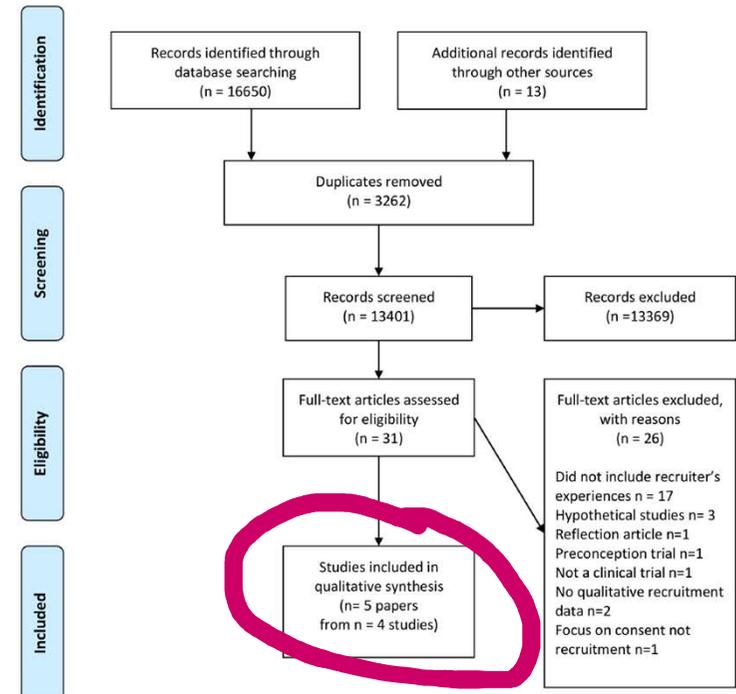
OPEN ACCESS

Citation: Hanrahan V, Gillies K, Biesty L (2020) Recruiters' perspectives of recruiting women during pregnancy and childbirth to clinical trials: A qualitative evidence synthesis. PLOS ONE 15(6): e0234783. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0234783>

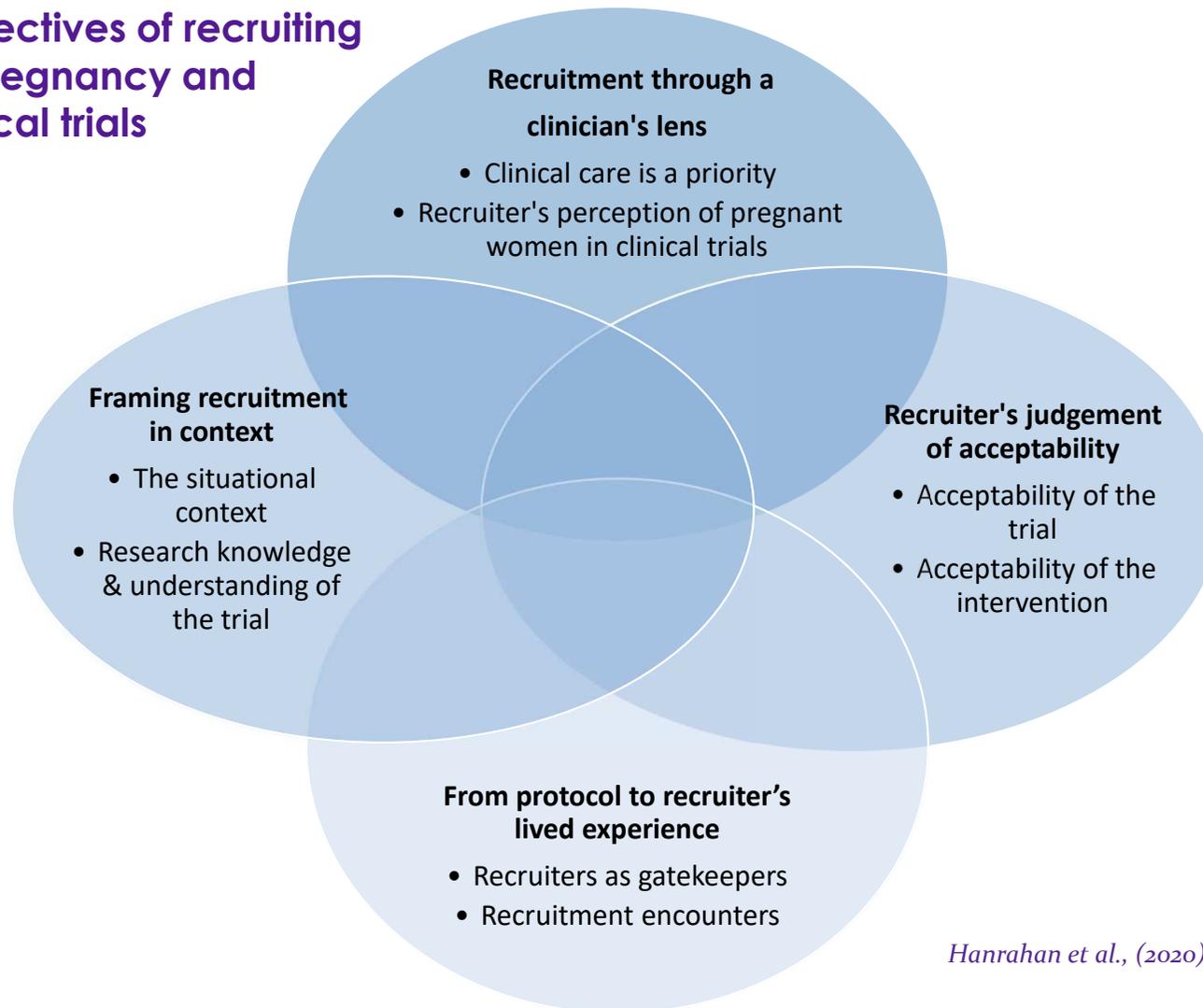
Editor: Tim Mathes, Universitat Witten/Herdecke, GERMANY



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Recruiter's perspectives of recruiting women during pregnancy and childbirth to clinical trials



Hanrahan et al., (2020)

Takeaway from the QES



Recruiter focused recruitment interventions



Journal of Clinical Epidemiology 113 (2019) 75–82

Journal of
Clinical
Epidemiology

REVIEW

Limited evidence exists on the effectiveness of education and training interventions on trial recruitment; a systematic review

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Abstract
Objective: The objective of this study was to examine the effectiveness of education and training interventions on recruitment to randomized and non-randomized trials.
Study Design and Setting: A systematic review of the effectiveness of education and training intervention for recruiters to trials. The review included randomized and non-randomized controlled trials of any type of education and training intervention for recruiters to trials, within any health care field. The primary outcome was recruitment rates, and secondary outcomes were quality of informed consent, recruiter self-confidence, understanding/knowledge of trial information, numbers of potential trial participants approached, satisfaction with training, and retention rates.
Results: Of the 19 records reviewed at full-text level, six met the inclusion criteria for our review. Owing to heterogeneity of outcomes

Townsend et al. *Trials* (2015) 16:432
DOI 10.1186/s13063-015-0908-6

RESEARCH



Open Access



A systematic review of training programmes for recruiters to randomised controlled trials

Daisy Townsend^a, Nicola Mills, Jelena Savović and Jenny L. Donovan

Abstract

Background: Recruitment to randomised controlled trials (RCTs) is often difficult. Clinician related factors have been implicated as important reasons for low rates of recruitment. Clinicians (doctors and other health professionals) can experience discomfort with some underlying principles of RCTs and experience difficulties in conveying them positively to potential trial participants. Recruiter training has been suggested to address identified problems but a synthesis of this research is lacking. The aim of our study was to systematically review the available evidence on training interventions for recruiters to randomised trials.

Methods: Studies that evaluated training programmes for trial recruiters were included. Those that provided only general communication training not linked to RCT recruitment were excluded. Data extraction and quality assessment were completed by two reviewers independently, with a third author where necessary.

Results: Seventeen studies of 9615 potentially eligible titles and abstracts were included in the review: three randomised controlled studies, two non-randomised controlled studies, nine uncontrolled pre-test/post-test studies, two qualitative studies, and a post-training questionnaire survey. Most studies were of moderate or weak quality. Training programmes were mostly set within cancer trials, and usually consisted of workshops with a mix of health professionals over one or two consecutive days covering generic and trial specific issues. Recruiter training programmes were well received and some increased recruiters' self-confidence in communicating key RCT concepts to patients. There was, however, little evidence that this training increased actual recruitment rates or patient understanding, satisfaction, or levels of informed consent.

Conclusions: There is a need to develop recruiter training programmes that can lead to improved recruitment and informed consent in randomised trials.

Keywords: Trials, Communication, Recruitment, Training, Randomisation, Equipoise



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Behavioural approach

Specify



Diagnose



Treat



Applying behavioural theory

- Behaviour Change Wheel

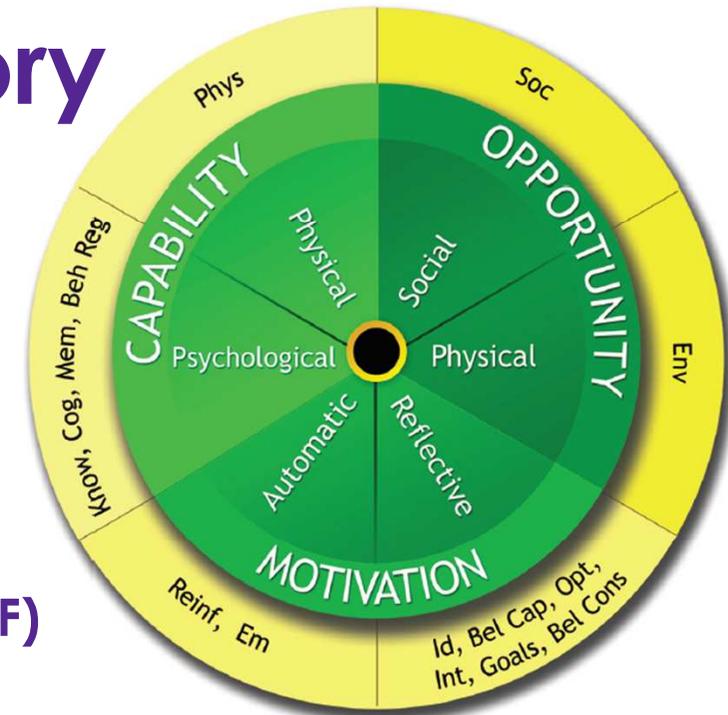
Michie et al., 2014



- Theoretical Domains Framework (TDF)

Cane et al., 2012

- ✓ 33 psychological theories
- ✓ Arranged into 14 domains



- Sources of behaviour
 - TDF Domains
- Soc - Social influences
- Env - Environmental Context and Resources
- Id - Social/Professional Role and Identity
- Bel Cap - Beliefs about Capabilities
- Opt - Optimism
- Int - Intentions
- Goals - Goals
- Bel Cons - Beliefs about Consequences
- Reinf - Reinforcement
- Em - Emotion
- Know - Knowledge
- Cog - Cognitive and interpersonal skills
- Mem - Memory, Attention and Decision Processes
- Beh Reg - Behavioural Regulation
- Phys - Physical skills

Previous application of the TDF in trial recruitment



Urologic Oncology: Seminars and Original Investigations 37 (2019) 529.e9–529.e18

UROLOGIC
ONCOLOGY

Clinical-Kidney cancer Science in the Heartland: Exploring determinants of offering cancer clinical trials in rural-serving community urology practices

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Received 19 October 2018; received in revised form 24 January 2019; accepted 10 March 2019

Abstract

Objective: Engaging community urologists in referring patients to clinical trials could increase the reach of cancer trials and, ultimately, alleviate cancer disparities. We sought to identify determinants of referring patients to clinical trials among urology practices serving rural communities.

Methods: We conducted semistructured qualitative interviews based on the Theoretical Domains Framework at nonmetropolitan urology practices located in communities offering urological cancer trials. Participants were asked to consider barriers and strategies that might support engaging their patients in discussions about urological cancer clinical trials and referring them appropriately. Recorded interviews were transcribed and coded using template analysis.

Results: Most participants were not aware of available trials and had no experience with trial referral. Overall, participants held positive

THE JOURNAL OF PEDIATRICS • www.jpeds.com



ORIGINAL
ARTICLES

So You Want to Give Stem Cells to Babies? Neonatologists and Parents' Views to Optimize Clinical Trials

Mireille Guillot, MD¹, Sarah Asad, MSc², Manoj M. Lalu, MD, PhD^{2,3,4,5}, Brigitte Lemyre, MD¹, Gisell Castillo, MA², Bernard Thébaud, MD, PhD^{1,3,5,6}, and Justin Presseau, PhD^{2,7}

Objective To identify barriers and enablers that may influence parents' and neonatologists' participation in clinical trials of mesenchymal stromal cells for bronchopulmonary dysplasia.

Study design This qualitative study involved one-on-one semistructured interviews with parents of extremely preterm infants (n = 18) and neonatologists (n = 16). Interview guides and directed content analysis were framed using the theoretical domains framework, a tool specifically developed for implementation research to identify influences on behavior.

Results Key barriers for parents included their lack of knowledge about clinical trial processes in general, stem cells, and concerns about their risks and side effects. Importantly, parents preferred to be approached for recruitment directly by a neonatologist, either before delivery or 1 or 2 weeks after birth. However, the majority of neonatologists felt that approaching parents was not part of their role. Neonatologists reported competing priorities, time commitment, costs, and lack of institutional support as significant barriers to their ability to recruit patients.

Conclusions By integrating stakeholders early into the development of a clinical trial of mesenchymal stromal cell therapy, we identified and can address important barriers to enrollment. Some identified barriers were unanticipated and could have compromised recruitment had they not been identified by this study. We suggest that this approach can be used more broadly for other early phase clinical trials in pediatrics. (*J Pediatr* 2019;210:41-7).

See related article, p 209

Preterm birth is a leading cause of infant morbidity and mortality worldwide.¹ Bronchopulmonary dysplasia (BPD), a chronic lung disease with potential life-long consequences, remains one of the most prevalent complications.² Survivors with BPD have impaired respiratory function, increased hospital readmission rates, and exhibit more neurodevelopmental problems.^{3,4} Currently, there is no treatment to prevent or ameliorate BPD.⁵ Numerous preclinical studies support the role of cell therapy, specifically mesenchymal stromal cells (MSCs), in promoting



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Recruiter's experience of recruiting pregnant women to clinical trials

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Specifying the behaviour

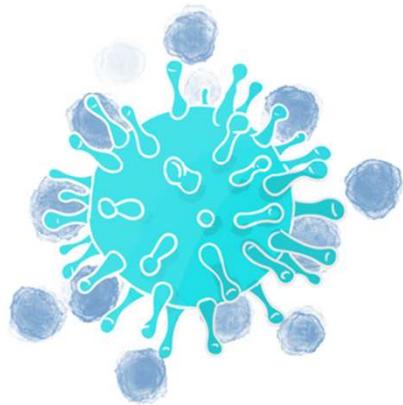
- **Action** - Behaviour that needs to change
- **Actor** - Person/people that do(es) or could do the action targeted
- **Context** - Setting in which the action is performed
- **Target** - To whom or for whom the action is performed
- **Time** - When the action is performed



Preseau *et al.*, (2019)

**“Healthcare professional recruiters
inviting all eligible pregnant women to
participate in a trial”**

ISLAGIATT principle



Three Phased Recruitment Plan



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RAND EUROPE
Pregnancy research review
Policy report
Susan Guthrie, Catherine Lichten, Brandi Leach, Jack Pollard, Sarah Parkinson, Marlene Altenhofer

MRC UK Research and Innovation
NIFS National Institute for Health Research
MRC-NIHR Overview of Global Maternal and Neonatal Health Research Priorities

NIH U.S. National Library of Medicine
ClinicalTrials.gov

EU Clinical Trials Register

Diagnosing the behaviour

- 22 Semi-structured online interviews



Broad range of clinical backgrounds



8 individual trials (covering 15 different sites) in Ireland & UK

- Inductive & deductive analysis



Our findings

- This is still a work in progress... but **preliminary** findings suggest...

**HOT
OF THE
PRESS!**



Incentives & rewards

Precarity of employment

Availability & accessibility of resources

Putting women's clinical care & wellbeing first

Being visible

Benefit of experience

Planning & preparation

Commitment to the research

Inductive Thematic analysis

Approach to recruiting

Recruitment targets

Gatekeeping

Being supported

Acceptability of the intervention

The 'right' participant

Deductive analysis

Mapping inductive themes to the TDF

	Theoretical Domains														
	Kn.	Sk.	S/PRI	Cap	Opt.	Con	Rein.	Int.	Goal.	MADP	ECR	SI	Em.	BR	
1. Availability & accessibility of resources											√				
2. Benefit of experience	√	√	√	√											
3. Putting women's clinical care & wellbeing first			√					√	√						
4. Planning & preparation	√									√				√	
5. Approach to recruiting		√				√					√		√		
6. The 'right' participant	√					√				√					
7. Acceptability of the intervention			√			√									
8. Being supported												√			
9. Gatekeeping			√					√				√	√		
10. Recruitment targets						√	√		√				√		

Theoretical Domains Framework - salient domains

- **Environmental context and resources**

“So, it can be quite difficult sometimes to have confidential conversations, which really is essential. So, I often spend time wandering around the hospital trying to find an empty cupboard to try and have a conversation in. Which, I mean you manage it, but it’s not ideal.” 2RM

Theoretical Domains Framework - salient domains

• Social/Professional Role & Identity

“I feel like in the hospital, we’re not quite second-class citizens, but... you’d never take precedence explaining your study over a nurse coming in, or a midwife coming into the room to a patient, you know, giving them their medication or taking their temperature, you’d always step back.” 17RN

Theoretical Domains Framework - salient domains

- **Beliefs about Consequences**

“If you’re doing a trial, where they were having to attend for more visits, that might not suit someone, though some women like that, and it is a reason they might take part in a trial. But, you know, that could be a little bit of a burden on them, an extra burden.” 20CI/PI

Treating the behaviour



- **Co-design** an intervention through online workshop
- **Testing** the intervention





- Applying learning from behavioural science provides a framework to rigorously **specify, diagnose** and **treat** behavioural problems in trials.
- It enables learning from one study to another to be maximised by application of a common set of principles

Behavioural approach beyond recruitment

Open access

Original research

BMJ Open Using a behavioural approach to explore the factors that affect questionnaire return within a clinical trial: a qualitative study based on the theoretical domains framework

Louisa Lawrie , Eilidh M Duncan, Jennifer Dunsmore, Rumana Newlands, Katie Gillies 

To cite: Lawrie L, Duncan EM, Dunsmore J, *et al.* Using a behavioural approach to explore the factors that affect questionnaire return within a clinical trial: a qualitative study based on the theoretical domains framework. *BMJ Open* 2021;11:e048128. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2020-048128

► Prepublication history and additional supplemental materials for this paper is available online. To view these files, please visit the journal online (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2020-048128>).

Received 28 December 2020

ABSTRACT

Objectives To identify barriers and enablers to participant retention in trials requiring questionnaire return using the theoretical domains framework (TDF).

Study design and setting We identified and subsequently invited participants who did not return at least one questionnaire during their participation in a clinical trial for one-to-one semi-structured telephone interviews. We used a behavioural framework (TDF) to explore whether any of the behavioural domains (eg, beliefs about consequences, emotion) affected questionnaire return. Thereafter, we generated a series of belief statements which summarised the content of participants' main responses and coded these under separate themes.

Participants We distributed invites to 279 eligible individuals and subsequently interviewed 9 participants who took part in the C-Gall trial. The C-Gall trial required

Strengths and limitations of this study

- We used an established theoretical framework to explore the factors that influence questionnaire non-response among clinical trial participants.
- It was difficult to engage trial non-responders and thus we recruited a small purposive sample (n=9).
- Findings, and the overall approach, will be useful for trialists to consider and adapt according to their clinical context.

INTRODUCTION

Postal and electronic questionnaires are commonly used to obtain outcome data from participants within randomised controlled



ENCOUNTER Study

rEcruiter's experieNce Of recrUiting
pregNant womEn to clinical tRIals

Thank you

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🐦 @ENCOUNTERStudy



🌐 www.encounterstudy.ie
#trialmethodology



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