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Clinical trials are imperative for testing novel therapies, advancing the science of new care pathways, and determining the best treatment strategies to enhance patient outcomes.

A key determinant of a successful clinical study is to efficiently recruit and retain an adequate number of study participants. If the clinical trial fails to enroll enough participants, this may extend the study timeline and increase costs. A prolonged study start-up may delay a drug or treatment reaching the market, delaying the time in which patients can access the new treatment.

More than 80% of clinical trials fail to meet their patient recruitment timelines[1]

Out of all terminated trials globally, 55% were terminated due to the low accrual rate

As much as 86% of clinical trials do not reach recruitment targets within their specified time periods[2]

Strategies to improve patient recruitment

Improving the patient recruitment process is imperative to avoid wasted investments and eliminate costly delays in bringing new treatments to market. Below is a short list of impactful strategies research sponsors can take to improve success rates in patient recruitment.

Data driven protocol design

Restrictive eligibility criteria often result in the exclusion of certain patient populations, which adds to the widening disparities seen between patients who enroll in trials and those treated in routine practice. It's imperative that when research teams are developing the protocol, they should develop the patient recruitment strategy at the same time to assess the impact.

Conducting data driven feasibility assessments on eligibility criteria is a best practice that helps determine whether broadening the criteria will result in a higher number of patients enrolled while also ensuring changes to criteria won't affect the outcome of the trial.

Leading organizations have implemented a process across their sites to track and monitor the specific

[1]https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7342339/

[2]https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S155171441730753X#bb0005

criteria that resulted in a failed screening. Be prepared to adapt the study protocol based on the observed trends in the aggregate data.

Eliminate knowledge-access barrier(s) for patients

Patients are increasingly willing to self-refer into clinical trials to increase their understanding of their indication and gain access to new treatment. So why does this interest not translate into participation? The reason is simply that patients are unaware on how to join a clinical trial. Increasing online awareness and access to your clinical trial through a trial specific webpage and online advertising will go a long way in eliminating this knowledge-access barrier with patients.

Engage community leaders

Where possible, patients should be engaged at the study design stage to ensure their feedback on criteria, endpoints and patient burden is taken into consideration before the study begins. To do so, engage community leaders, patient advocates, and key opinion leaders to reach an established patient group, or a diverse patient population. Patients are more likely to trust information about trials they receive through patient advocacy communities and non-profit organizations.

Continuous patient engagement

An often-ignored barrier to the success of clinical research is ongoing communication with trial participants. The issue is further compounded by inconsistent contact after their initial engagement. Continuous contact is vital in creating the sense that their contribution is highly valued. Patients must be able to ask questions and voice concerns during recruitment and throughout the study.

Dialogue with patients is not just important during studies. The relationship must also be long-term if it is to be far reaching. Every trial participant is potentially an ambassador for clinical research, and every opportunity must be taken to engage them. The progress of the study, its outcome, and the impact of the research on healthcare should all be offered back to volunteers with thanks for their contribution.

How can Sciteline Help?

Sciteline's Recruitment Marketplace digitizes and streamlines the patient recruitment and screening process allowing research teams to accelerate trial recruitment timelines and build deeper relationships with patients. Our products and services include:

Trial marketing & advertising:

- **Trial search tool:** we eliminate access barriers for patients by providing a free to use trial search tool that provides a personalized search result of trial options.

- **Trial webpage:** we enable you to configure a trial webpage with our easy-to-use trial page builder.

Pre-screening capabilities:

- **Online pre-qualification:** our online tools pre-qualify patients who self-refer saving themselves and researchers' precious time.

- **Electronic pre-screening:** monitor aggregate screen fail trends in real time by conducting pre-screening processes digitally.

Patient & Referral Management:

- **Patient database:** maintain a database of candidates for your trials while having a 360 view of candidate interactions, patient details, and historical screening data.

- **eReferrals:** gain access to a new network of potential patient populations through our eReferral service to accelerate your recruitment timelines.

Dashboards and Visualization:

- **Visualization:** visualize your accrual data in real-time to observe trends, key performance and risk indicators.

Partner services:

- **Digital recruitment services:** We'll work with our partners to create a differentiated and personalized digital recruitment strategy to meet and find patients where they are online.

About Sciteline

Sciteline combines creative thinking, robust research and cross industry leadership experience to develop decentralized clinical trial solutions to help solve some of Canada's most challenging issues facing clinical research. Our mission is to accelerate the generation of new knowledge by enabling researchers to achieve their best work while connecting them with a diverse population of clinical trial participants. We believe that by reducing the patient burden and changing the status quo, we can lower the cost of delivering new treatments and medical devices to patients.

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Research organizations small and large continue to respond to a rapidly changing landscape and strive to pursue innovative solutions to address today's challenges. Sciteline understands the complexity of these challenges and works with clients to drive progress in digital adoption in clinical research.