

SWAT 18: Gifts to improve participation in research

Objective of this SWAT

To evaluate the effects on recruitment of providing different gifts with the initial invitation letter.

Study area: Recruitment.

Sample type: Participants.

Estimated funding level needed: Low (depending on the cost of the gifts).

Background

Recruitment for scientific studies can be challenging.[1] One potential solution is to provide a gift as an incentive with the initial invitation letter to try to boost interest in the study. A version of this SWAT has been implemented in the MOSAICC study which is an observational cohort study on the aetiology of myeloproliferative neoplasms. In this version of the SWAT, described here, participants were sent a pen, charity trolley token, both or neither.

Interventions and comparators

Intervention 1: Potential participants are sent a pen (either charity branded or plain) and a charity token for use in supermarket trollies with their initial invitation letter.

Intervention 2: Potential participants are sent a pen (either charity branded or plain) with their initial invitation letter.

Intervention 3: Potential participants are sent a charity token for use in supermarket trollies with their initial invitation letter.

Intervention 4: Potential participants are sent their initial invitation letter with no gift.

Index Type: Incentive

Method for allocating to intervention or comparator

Randomisation.

Outcome measures

Primary outcomes: Number and proportion of potential participants who are recruited.

Secondary outcomes: Number and proportion of recruited participants who complete the study.

Analysis plans

Comparative analyses of people in the randomised groups and analyses of the study elements that are completed.

Possible problems in implementing this SWAT

That potential participants will have such strong feelings about joining the study that the incentive will not have any effect on them. The ethical and consent challenges of not informing a subset of the participants about the compensation or about the SWAT.

References

1. Treweek S, Mitchell E, Pitkethly M, Cook J, Kjeldstrøm M, Johansen M, Taskila TK, Sullivan F, Wilson S, Jackson C, Jones R, Lockhart P. Strategies to improve recruitment to randomised controlled trials. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2010; (4): MR000013.

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