

# **SWAT 145: The Sticker Swat: Does a trial logo sticker placed on the outside of the envelope encourage the return of postal questionnaires**

## **Objective of this SWAT**

To assess whether having a trial logo sticker on the outside of an envelope sent to participants by the trial office improve response rates to postal questionnaires in a randomised trial.

Study area: Retention, Follow-up

Sample type: Participants

Estimated funding level needed: Very Low

## **Background**

A lower than anticipated response rate to trial questionnaires in randomised trials is a problem that needs addressing because it could jeopardise the validity and generalisability of the trials and their results. A theory-informed approach to improve retention rates has been incorporated in previous trials in the Centre for Healthcare and Randomised Trials (CHaRT), using behaviour change techniques (BCTs) to improve response rates to postal questionnaires, assuming returning a trial questionnaire is the target behaviour. One possible behaviour change technique is adding a prompt, such as the trial logo added as a sticker, to the envelope used to post the trial questionnaire to the participant. The sticker would act as a reminder of the trial and prompt the participant to open the envelope and complete the enclosed questionnaire, rather than discarding the unopened envelope as presumed junk mail. There is some evidence from the IQuaD dental trial (ISRCTN56465715) that a randomised SWAT, where a trial logo sticker was added to an envelope resulted in a small improvement in response rates compared to an envelope with no sticker [1].

Participants due to receive their next follow-up postal questionnaire (including reminders) will be randomised to receive either the intervention (envelope with trial logo sticker) or the control (envelope with no sticker). Replicating this SWAT in other randomised trials with differing trial populations has the additional benefit of informing general trial methodology research.

## **Interventions and comparators**

Intervention 1: Trial logo sticker placed on top corner of envelope containing questionnaire and cover letter

Intervention 2: Envelope containing questionnaire and cover letter with no sticker

Index Type: Method of Follow-up

## **Method for allocating to intervention or comparator**

Randomisation

## **Outcome measures**

Primary: Response rate to postal annual questionnaires (defined as the proportion of patients returning their postal follow-up questionnaire or reminder questionnaire).

Secondary: Response rates at different time points

## **Analysis plans**

The proportion of questionnaires returned in each SWAT group will be compared using a Z test for difference in proportions. Each questionnaire at a given follow-up point will be treated as independent.

## **Possible problems in implementing this SWAT**

Some trials may be of a sensitive nature, and concerns about compromising the anonymity for participants taking part may be raised. The trial sponsor may require a substantial amendment application be sent to the Research Ethics Committee before this SWAT can be embedded in the host randomised trial. Trial costs might increase slightly in order to print additional trial logo stickers for use on the envelopes and there may be a small increase in staff time required to put stickers on the envelopes.

## **References**

1. Goulao B, Duncan A, Floate R, Clarkson J, Ramsay C. Three behaviour change theory informed randomised studies within a trial to improve response rates to trial postal questionnaires. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology* 2020;122:35-41 doi: 10.1016/j.jclinepi.2020.01.018

## **Publications or presentations of this SWAT design**

Goulao B, Duncan A, Floate R, Clarkson J, Ramsay C. Three behaviour change theory informed randomised studies within a trial to improve response rates to trial postal questionnaires. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology* 2020;122:35-41 doi: 10.1016/j.jclinepi.2020.01.018

## **Examples of the implementation of this SWAT**

IQuaD (Improving the quality of dentistry) randomised trial

People to show as the source of this idea: Anne Duncan, Karen Innes, Beatriz Goulao, Craig Ramsay

Contact email address: anne.duncan@abdn.ac.uk, kareninnes@abdn.ac.uk

Date of idea: 1/MAY/2019

Revisions made by:

Date of revisions: