

SWAT 2: Timing and mode of delivery of a self-completion questionnaire

Objective of this SWAT

To determine the effects on return rates of the timing and mode of delivery when giving a research participant a self-completion questionnaire.

Study area: Follow-up.

Sample type: Participant.

Estimated funding level needed: Low.

Background

Recruiting, retaining and gathering complete data on participants in research projects, can be extremely difficult [1,2]. These problems increase the risk that research will be abandoned before its true value is appreciated, or lead to delays in resolving uncertainty for decision makers, while further studies are done. Poor recruitment, retention and outcome collection frequently lead to many prospective studies being extended, increasing costs. Researchers need to use strategies that are themselves evidence-based. This SWAT proposes to provide evidence on what research participants prefer in relation to self-completion questionnaires with the following specific objectives.

Interventions and comparators

Intervention 1: Be given a paper questionnaire in person at the end of a home visit.

Intervention 2: Be sent a paper questionnaire in the post approximately one week after the home visit, along with a thank-you certificate for participation to-date.

Index Type: Method of Follow-up

Method for allocating to intervention or comparator

Randomisation.

Outcome measures

Primary outcomes: Return of the questionnaire.

Secondary outcomes: Time to return of the questionnaire; completeness of the returned questionnaire.

Analysis plans

The primary analysis is the comparison of the proportion of participants who return a completed questionnaire in the different randomised groups.

Possible problems in implementing this SWAT

A possible problem that may be encountered in this research would be the impact of participant reminders on the timing and return of the self-completion questionnaire. Any reminders given to participants would also need to be recorded and accounted for in the analysis. Another problem would be ensuring that the randomization schedule is adhered to and accurate record-keeping occurs.

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.
2. Brueton VC, Tierney J, Stenning S, Harding S, Meredith S, Nazareth I, Rait G. Strategies to improve retention in randomised trials. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2013; (12): MR000032.

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