

SWAT 17: Sending a letter or telephoning potential participants as a method of follow-up to improve recruitment to research

Objective of this SWAT

To evaluate the effects on recruitment of following up initial invitation letters with a letter or a telephone call.

Study area: Recruitment.

Sample type: Participants.

Estimated funding level needed: Low.

Background

Recruitment for scientific studies can be challenging.[1] There is uncertainty about whether potential participants should be contacted by telephone or letter to follow up on their initial invitation to join a 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.

Interventions and comparators

Intervention 1: Potential participants are telephoned to follow up on their initial invitation to join a study.

Intervention 2: Potential participants are sent a letter to follow up on their initial invitation to join a study.

Index Type: Method of Recruitment

Method for allocating to intervention or comparator

Randomisation.

Outcome measures

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

Analysis plans

Comparative analyses of people in the randomised groups.

Possible problems in implementing this SWAT

That potential participants will have such strong feelings about joining the study that the different types of follow-up to their initial invitation will not have any effect on them.

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.

People to show as the source of this idea: Lesley Anderson and Glen James.

Contact email address: l.anderson@qub.ac.uk.

Date of idea: 1 January 2012.