

SWAT 54: Giving trial participants a thank you note or card after each study visit

Objective of this SWAT

To examine whether giving a thank you note or card to enrolled participants after each study-related visit improves their retention in the trial.

Study area: Retention

Sample type: Participants

Estimated funding level needed: Low

Background

Retention within clinical trials is a major problem with many trials failing to retain adequate numbers of participants. Some trial fail to retain a sufficient number of participants for their main analyses, leaving the research question for the trial unanswered. Alongside the loss of valuable healthcare and scientific knowledge, there is a loss of resources and time. Times to completion for trials can be prolonged and the costs of trials can increase. Further evidence is needed to identify the optimal strategies to retain participants in the trial.[1] Thanking participants for their involvement in a trial was reported as a strategy for trying to improve retention in a survey of Clinical Trials Units in the United Kingdom.[2] Therefore, this SWAT will investigate the effects of giving patients a thank you card after each study-related visit. It will be implemented in two unrelated trials and their results will be compared.

Interventions and comparators

Intervention 1: Generic thank you card or note

Intervention 2: Personalised thank you card or note

Intervention 3: No thank you card or note

Index Type: Incentive

Method for allocating to intervention or comparator

Randomisation

Outcome measures

Primary: Proportion of participants who remain in the study.

Secondary: Time that participants remain in the study before they withdraw.

Analysis plans

This SWAT will compare retention between the three intervention groups and the total time participants spend in the trial in each intervention group.

Possible problems in implementing this SWAT

If participants want to keep their involvement in a trial confidential, they might not wish to receive a personalised card.

References

1. Brueton VC, Tierney J, Stenning S, et al. Strategies to improve retention in randomised trials. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2013; (12): MR000032.
2. Bower P, Brueton V, Gamble C, et al. Interventions to improve recruitment and retention in clinical trials: a survey and workshop to assess current practice and future priorities. Trials 2014; 15: 399.

Publications or presentations of this SWAT design

Examples of the implementation of this SWAT

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