

SWAT 88: Telephone versus SMS reminders to participants about attending a screening assessment for randomised trials

Objective of this SWAT

To compare the response rates and costs of using telephone calls or short message service (SMS) to remind prospective participants about attending a screening assessment for a randomised trial.

Study area: Recruitment

Sample type: Participants

Estimated funding level needed: Low

Background

Attrition during the recruitment process for a randomised trial is a problem, particularly in trials of disease prevention where prospective participants are usually healthy volunteers. Telephone reminders have been shown to improve recruitment [1] but they require staff time and money. SMS reminders may be quicker and cheaper but it is uncertain if they will be better, similar or worse than telephone reminders. This SWAT will address this and is set within the T4DM diabetes prevention study (ACTRN12612000287831).[2]

Interventions and comparators

Intervention 1: SMS reminder to T4DM study participants who do not attend for a further screening assessment within 4 weeks of completing pre-screening.

Intervention 2: Telephone reminder to T4DM study participants who do not attend for a further screening assessment within 4 weeks of completing pre-screening.

Index Type: Method of Recruitment

Method for allocating to intervention or comparator

Randomisation

Outcome measures

Primary: Attendance for screening assessment within 8 weeks of completing pre-screening (i.e. within 4 weeks of screening reminder)

Secondary: Cost of reminders

Analysis plans

Attendance in the intervention groups will be compared using a chi squared test, with relative risks and 95% confidence intervals used to summarise the effect. Subgroup analyses are planned for age, how participants heard about the study and whether or not they completed pre-screening online or by telephone.

Possible problems in implementing this SWAT

* Staff time required to provide telephone and SMS reminders in a timely manner.

* Access to bulk SMS service to send SMS messages.

References

1. Treweek S, Pitkethly M, Cook J, et al. Strategies to improve recruitment to randomised trials. *Cochrane Database of Systematic* 2018;(2):MR000013.
2. Wittert G, Atlantis E, Allan C, et al. Testosterone therapy to prevent type 2 diabetes mellitus in at-risk men (T4DM): Design and implementation of a double-blind randomized controlled trial." *Diabetes, Obesity and Metabolism* 2018 Dec 5 [epub ahead of print] doi: 10.1111/dom.13601.

Publications or presentations of this SWAT design

Bracken K, et al. Using phone, SMS and email screening reminders to improve clinical trial recruitment: results from a sub-study of the t4dm diabetes prevention study. 4th International Clinical Trials Methodology Conference and the 38th Annual Meeting of the Society of Clinical Trials, Liverpool, UK. 2017

Examples of the implementation of this SWAT

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