SWAT 92: Pen incentive to enhance retention in a randomised trial

Objective of this SWAT
To evaluate the effects on retention of providing a pen with the 3-month follow-up questionnaire.

Study area: Retention
Sample type: Participants
Estimated funding level needed: Very Low

Background
There is some evidence that using a pen as a nonmonetary incentive increases response rates to surveys and time to response for follow-up questionnaires in trials [1, 2]. The theoretical basis underlying the use of pen incentives is that of reciprocation, where people feel obligated to respond with positive behaviour received, with positive behaviour in return [3-6]. In the context of recruitment to trials, offering a potential participant a gift such as a pen may make the person more likely to take up the trial invitation to enrol; and providing a pen as part of the request for follow-up may do similar for retention. It is also possible that the convenience of having a pen to hand when being asked to complete a form may increase its likelihood of being completed. A trial in the USA, embedded in an observational study, showed that including a pen with the study logo to a questionnaire mailed to women who had previously not responded significantly improved recruitment rates [7]. However, to our knowledge, there have been no trials, which have evaluated the impact of using a pen to increase retention in a randomised trial (although SWAT 18 includes an evaluation of a pen as an incentive to join a case-control study).

Interventions and comparators
Intervention 1: Pen printed with the trial logo sent along with the 3-month follow-up questionnaire.
Intervention 2: No pen.

Index Type: Incentive

Method for allocating to intervention or comparator
Randomisation

Outcome measures
Primary: Proportion of participants who return the 3-month questionnaire.
Secondary: Time to response (length of time taken to return the questionnaire), completeness of response (number of questions completed) and whether a reminder notice is required (number of participants requiring a reminder mailing divided by the number of participants who were sent a questionnaire).

Analysis plans
Binary data will be compared using logistic regression, time to response by a Cox proportional hazards model, and completeness of response by a linear regression model. All models will adjust for age, gender, and allocation for a separate factorial SWAT that is embedded at the recruitment stage (anyone not randomised into the factorial trial will be considered in the 'no pen' group).

Possible problems in implementing this SWAT
No problems anticipated.

References

Publications or presentations of this SWAT design

Examples of the implementation of this SWAT

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Date of idea: 1/APR/2019
Revisions made by:
Date of revisions: