SWAT 89: Including a theoretically informed leaflet in a participant take-home pack of questionnaires to increase response rate

Objective of this SWAT
The joint aims of this study are:
(a) To design a leaflet using a theory based behaviour change framework (anticipating the Theoretical Domains Framework) with the aim of maximising participant questionnaire response rates (achieved)
(b) To further test this specific approach in a pragmatic setting to provide evidence of its applicability and effectiveness in respect of participant behaviour and adherence

Study area: Retention, Follow-up
Sample type: Participants
Estimated funding level needed: Unfunded

Background
Ensuring adequately high levels of participant response rates is a common challenge for clinical trials.[1]

Although not conclusive, there is some evidence that interventions based on theoretical frameworks are more effective than interventions that are not theoretically informed.[2] Furthermore, the Medical Research Council highly recommends implementing behaviour change interventions based on theory when implementing complex interventions.[3] Since asking someone to return questionnaires is asking them to engage in a specific behaviour, behaviour change theories may inform successful methods to increase questionnaire responses. The Theoretical Domains Framework (TDF) is a tool for identifying theoretical targets for behaviour change interventions, which contains a collection of similar constructs drawn from many psychological models and put into theoretical domains (e.g. beliefs about consequences; social influence; knowledge).[4] Psychological constructs (e.g. attitude, self-efficacy, perceived control) within the domains can be modified using suitable behaviour change techniques (BCTs). These construct and domain appropriate BCTs are identifiable from BCT taxonomies.[5,6]

In a recent randomised study (SWAT 24), behaviour change interventions to encourage questionnaire completion were identified using the TDF and strategies known to influence salient domains for the target behaviour (returning the trial questionnaire) feasible to operationalise in a letter format (e.g. goal setting, persuasion) were incorporated into a cover letter sent out with trial questionnaires. The study showed that the return rate was significantly higher in those who received the theoretically informed letter than the group that received the original cover letter.[7]

This SWAT extends that research. It is being done with the PUrE randomised trial that is comparing different ways of treating lower pole kidney stones (ISRCTN98970319). The PUrE trial process is for participants to be issued with a participant pack containing the one and two week questionnaires, which they will take home with them following their intervention (the remaining questionnaires are issued from the trial office). In this SWAT, we aim to increase response rates to the PUrE questionnaires by including a theoretically informed leaflet in the participant pack that outlines the importance of questionnaire response. The content of this leaflet has been designed using an appropriate behavioural framework required for targeting the behavioural determinants relevant to this patient group as identified from evidence in the literature and input from a kidney stone patient group.

Interventions and comparators
Intervention 1: Theoretically informed leaflet in the participant pack
Intervention 2: Generic compliments slip in the participant pack

Index Type: Participant Information

Method for allocating to intervention or comparator
Randomisation
Outcome measures
Primary: Participant response rates at one, two and twelve weeks post-intervention
Secondary:

Analysis plans

Possible problems in implementing this SWAT
Slow rate of recruitment to main study.

References

Publications or presentations of this SWAT design

Examples of the implementation of this SWAT

People to show as the source of this idea: Kath Starr, Dawn McRae, Katie Gillies, Claire Cooper, Anna Wolfe
Contact email address: k.starr@abdn.ac.uk
Date of idea: 31/JAN/2016
Revisions made by: Kath Starr
Date of revisions: 29/JUL/2019