

Scientific/Educational Workshop

Workshop title

The challenges and opportunities of rehabilitation research patient recruitment

Workshop organizer

Louise Brisbois (UHN-TRI)

Speakers

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Workshop goals

The proposed workshop is designed to share the common challenges associated with recruitment for rehabilitation intervention studies, and share the solution that Toronto Rehabilitation Institute and Spinal Cord Injury Trial Toolkit have developed to increase patient engagement in research.

Learning Objectives:

1. To highlight common challenges associated with clinical trial recruitment in general, and SCI interventions specifically.
2. To provide an overview of the Central Recruitment process at TRI and SCITT.
3. To reflect on how this discussion might influence recruitment procedures in your research setting.

Abstract

Sufficient participant recruitment is vital to the success of research studies, however obtaining an adequate number of participants within a specified timeline is one of the most challenging aspects of the research process. Failure to recruit the intended sample size is common for studies involving humans, and low accrual is the leading reason for early study termination. It is detrimental to the research enterprise as this results in extended recruitment periods, increased costs, study termination and delays in implementation of potential life-saving breakthroughs. In rehabilitation research, reasons for inadequate recruitment are numerous and multifaceted. Inpatients who undergo rehabilitation are typically affected by very complex, emotionally and physically debilitating impairments with associated functional disability. Hence, characteristics unique to these patient-populations make recruitment particularly challenging. In addition, narrow inclusion criteria can make it more difficult to find eligible patients to recruit. To improve recruitment, some suggest increasing research infrastructure for effective recruitment: building closer relationships with clinical staff and establishing shared responsibilities, development and implementation of patient-population tailored recruitment procedures, and recruiting for multiple studies from a single site while adhering to ethical standards of voluntariness and full disclosure of all information necessary for meaningful risk-benefit analysis. Toronto Rehab has created a Central Recruitment (CR) process of patient recruitment which incorporates some of the proposed strategies in prior publications. The process was established on the TRI Spinal Cord Injury inpatient unit, but has since been implemented across the organization on seven additional inpatient rehabilitation units with greater heterogeneity in impairment. Wings for Life has also developed a web-based Spinal Cord Injury Trials Toolkit (SCITT), the goal of SCITT is to help overcome barriers to successful patient enrollment in and completion of SCI clinical trials internationally. It has integrated portals of entry for patients looking for research opportunities, where they can enter personal health profiles, and for clinicians looking to refer patients.