Allowable Strategies for Successful Research Recruitment, Screening & Retention at UVM and UVMMC

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How can researchers approach potential participants?
Most common recruitment method

Study investigators who are health care providers (clinicians) providing direct care can recruit their own patients
Study investigators with no treatment relationship may send a “Dear Doctor” letter asking for referrals of eligible patients who are interested in research participation.
Example of a recruitment handout to correspond with the “Dear Doctor” Letter

Treating physicians can opt to distribute this info to their patients.

Treating physicians are not participating in the research but just the conduit between researcher and potential participant.
Hi [Insert Patient Name],

My name is [Coordinator Name] and I work in clinical research for the Vermont Lung Center. I am reaching out because you indicated to your Clinic provider, [Insert Provider Name], that you may be interested in hearing about a research study. I have attached the study consent form for your review. I would be happy to speak with you in more detail about what the study entails and if you have any questions or concerns. Please let me know if you are interested in hearing more from me. My contact information is as follows:

E-mail: [fill in coordinator e-mail]
Phone: [fill in office line]
Fax: [fill in fax number]

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,

[Coordinator Name]
Study investigators recruiting potential participants who are unknown to them for behavioral or non-clinical research (no PHI)

Examples:
- include snowball sampling (existing study participants recruit future participants from among their acquaintances),
- use of social networks,
- direct approach to unknown people in public situations,
- and random dialing
- UVM Psychology Participant Pool
Advertisements

- Ads should include information such as:
  - Name and address of the research facility;
  - The condition or disease that will be the focus of the research;
  - A clear statement that the study is research; **required**
  - Summary of criteria for eligibility to participate;
  - Time and commitments that will be required of the participant;
  - Location of the study and the contact for information.
University of Vermont needs smokers!

Want to quit smoking cigarettes? **We can help!**

Must be between the ages of 18-29 and use both cigarettes and e-cigarettes to participate.

Eligible participants will be provided with **FREE** quit smoking **treatments** for 3 months and answer weekly online surveys.

Compensation up to **$500.00** provided for completing study activities.

Visit our website to learn more and find out if you are eligible: uvmsmoking.edu

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**Recruitment advertisements should NOT:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contain</th>
<th>Contain explicit or implicit claims of safety and efficacy or equivalency or superiority to other approved treatments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emphasize</td>
<td>Emphasize the amount of reimbursement that subjects will receive. The ads may state that reimbursement may be provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promise</td>
<td>Promise a favorable outcome or benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promise</td>
<td>Promise “free treatment” when the intent is only to say participants will not be charged for taking part in the research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use</td>
<td>Use terms such as &quot;new treatment,&quot; &quot;new medication&quot; or &quot;new drug&quot; without explaining that the test article is investigational</td>
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Using Social Media to Recruit Research Participants
Researchers should be aware of any research or recruitment-related restrictions on the social media sites through which they intend to conduct their recruitment activities. This includes a site’s advertising, privacy and prohibited content policies.
Direct Social Media vs. Interactive Social Media

• Direct social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok etc.) paid ads that do not involve direct communication with potential subjects
  • Can be submitted and reviewed according to existing IRB policy under the Advertisements.
  • Interested participants must contact the researchers with the contact info listed

• Interactive social media where the study team develops an account specific to the recruitment and retention of study participants
  • Direct messaging through the platform
  • May be best suited for retention of study participants enrolled in long term protocols.
Recruiting via Social Media

Public and Private Groups Considerations

• Any site restrictions on the forum?
  • Check the terms of use
• Is there a group moderator?
  • researchers may need to gain permission or have an introduction prior to recruitment
• How will researchers contact potential participants?
  • Private direct message or public conversation
  • Perhaps a separate study email could be set up to direct potential participants once screening start
Use of Amazon Mechanical Turk as recruitment venue

• Explicitly mention the study (survey) is “research” and not a “job.” This can be in the title of the request.

• Address whether the compensation is contingent upon certain conditions.

• Ensure the complexity of the task and the amount of time expected for completion is reasonable and communicated clearly in the consent process.
Payment should not be contingent upon completion of the entire study, partial or prorated payment be offered.

Special attention is needed when recruiting students and employees or colleagues.
How can a researcher recruit students and employees and ensure valid consent is given without undue influence?

- Posting IRB approved advertisements/posters throughout the university to recruit participants from a broad base;
- Avoiding any personal solicitations of students by faculty, graduate assistants, or fellow students. In seeking potential participants among employees, the best strategy is to utilize a third party unassociated with the work relationship;
- Providing several research projects from which to choose, if enrolling as a participant is a course requirement.
- Providing alternative and equal methods for meeting course credit (or extra credit) requirements, such as attending a series of research presentations by faculty, writing a brief paper, conducting one’s own research;
- Making it clear in the consent form that refusal to participate will not affect class standing, grades, status on an athletic team, or job standing.
Retention materials

Any items such as money, small tokens, gift certificates, etc., which are given to the participant to retain their participation in research is considered a form of compensation and needs prior approval by the IRB.
The FDA, OHRP and the UVM IRB considers direct advertising for potential research participants to be the start of the informed consent and subject selection process.