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Australia shines in clinical trial activity ranking but gaps exist

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Systemic reluctance for trial sponsors and researchers to share data at the time of setting-up their trial account, up to 20 percent



An examination of how clinical trials have changed in Australia over the past 15 years has identified challenges such as lack of balance in the types of research, lack of collaboration among Australian researchers, and the importance of diversity of funding.

The study, published in Medical Journal of Australia, was led by researchers from the NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre at the University of Sydney.

Researchers looked at clinical trials conducted in Australia between 2006 and 2020. The data was collected from the Australian New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry and ClinicalTrials.gov, which captures 95 percent of registered trials in Australia.

Australian trials cover a wide variety of healthcare interventions. 45 percent are drug trials and there has been an increase in earlier phases of these trials. An overwhelming proportion of clinical trials was focused on treatments (75 percent) compared to prevention (15 percent). Nearly half of these trials conducted in Australia had some industry involvement.

0.8 percent of trials had a specific focus on the health of First Nations Peoples. Australian research funding may not be keeping up with the burden of certain diseases in the country. Many trial sponsors and scientists were reluctant to share data, which can result in research waste. Only 1 in 5 planned on sharing their data.

In the US, it is mandated that any National Institutes of Health (NIH) funded project needs to share data for certain types of studies. However, in Australia, data sharing for clinical trials is not mandated by the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), which is responsible for medical research and a major public funding body in the country.

But now a national infrastructure, Health Data Australia, is there that helps a researcher to request access to data.