

3 Practical Ways to Encourage Women's Clinical Trial Participation

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We must always remember that people are at the core of everything we do. If we want faster, more efficient, cost-effective research, we need to recruit and retain the right patients for every study. These steps help make that possible.

Clinical trial recruitment and retention remain pressing issues industry-wide even as the research landscape undergoes ongoing changes to become more accessible for patients — from on-site to at home. Women in particular face a unique set of challenges to participation, but the good news is that feasible solutions are available. All they require is a commitment to action. Here are three easy yet too often overlooked ways to make clinical trial participation better for female participants.

Create an atmosphere of trust

The unfortunate truth is that women face an uphill battle in having their medical concerns taken seriously by medical professionals. They are used to having their pain dismissed, their discomfort overlooked, and their conditions misdiagnosed. Ensuring that site staff and primary investigators are aware of this implicit bias trend and actively working to mitigate it is essential to creating an atmosphere of trust so women can feel comfortable participating in the clinical trial.

Offer childcare options

Not all women who sign up for clinical trials have young children to care for, of course, but many do. Even elderly female patients in the study may be serving as a primary caregiver. Ensure that they are not barred from trial participation if they can't find child care. Build on-site child care options into any study involving women, and/or offer decentralised trial options when possible so they don't need to disrupt their typical caretaker schedules to participate.

Staff-supported study travel

For study participants of all genders who need to travel to participate in the research, the question of whether they will need to give up their jobs to participate is a very real one. So naturally, financial and travel support for study participants is essential. However, there is another aspect of study travel support that is frequently overlooked: personal support.

For patients suffering from chronic debilitating illness or disease, travel can be emotionally, mentally, and physically overwhelming. Not everyone has someone from their community with the time, resources, and ability to travel with them to study and support them in simply getting from point A to point B. A study-assigned travel companion who can help the patient get to and from the airport, the train station, the bus, or even just the parking lot can make a world of difference. Women in particular may feel vulnerable traveling alone. Providing staff-supported study travel helps them participate with more confidence and ease.

Being proactive about meeting the female patients' needs from day one of the studies — and ensuring that potential participants understand the full scope of such efforts — will make recruitment and retention of women in the study much easier and more sustainable. At the end of the day, we must always remember that people are at the core of everything we do. If we want faster, more efficient, cost-effective research, we need to recruit and retain the right patients for every study. These steps help make that possible.

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