

## Case Study - Mock Study Rehearsals

Thames Valley and South Midlands LCRN have been piloting mock study rehearsals at one of their Trusts. This involves pairing up a Research Champion with a member of staff involved in recruiting patients into studies. The rehearsal provides the opportunity to do a dummy run of approaching a patient about a study, either replicating an initial conversation where the study is introduced, or rehearsing a more in-depth discussion for consent taking.

The project came about after analysis of local PRES data highlighted good practice in communications with patients when explaining studies. It was felt this should be developed into a support package as this was something patients clearly valued but may be skills some staff lacked confidence or experience around. After a Staff Research Champion suggested mock rehearsals as a way of practicing communication with participants, the PPI team put together an initial proposal. This was then discussed with a group of Patient Representatives and the proposal was developed into a guidance document explaining how the process should work.

The mock rehearsals can be used as a training opportunity to encourage staff to consider the types of questions a patient may ask, and how best to word their conversations to ensure clarity. The offer is open to all study teams, from any specialty, and has been piloted so far in one Trust.

### How the mock study rehearsals work

Research teams complete a request form giving information about the study they wish to rehearse, and how much research experience the staff member has.

The rehearsals fall into two parts, which can be completed together or separately:

#### Part 1: Initial 'blind' study introduction

The RC is told the medical specialty of the study that will be discussed

The staff member provides a short verbal overview of the study, as if they were introducing it to a patient for the first time

The RC then feeds back their thoughts on how the study information was presented

#### Part 2: In-depth consent taking discussion

The RC is provided with the study's PIS 48 hours in advance of the call

The staff member provides a more in-depth explanation of the study and what it involves

The RC asks questions about the study that a patient may want to know the answers to, and provides feedback on the detailed explanation

The same study can be used for both parts if the calls are to take place at different times, or teams can propose two different studies to be used. It is recommended that the member of staff's manager is present for both parts of the activity, to support constructive feedback. A member of staff from the LCRN is also on the call, to facilitate the discussion.

Mock study rehearsals now form part of the inductions for new research staff within the Trust where the scheme was piloted, and it is hoped that other Trusts will take on the same model and also include it in consent-taking training. There are also hopes that more senior or experienced staff will also make use of the scheme to help them review their communication style, or to practice when working within a different specialty to usual, which has been very common during the COVID-19 pandemic. There may also be benefits to non-research clinic or ward staff participating in the scheme if they are asked to initially introduce a study to a patient before referring on to the research team.

At the moment, it's too soon to see if the project has improved participant recruitment with the new staff. The PPI team plan to go back to the staff involved a few months after the rehearsal to then ask the teams if it's supported recruitment and analyse any changes.

Key learnings so far

Staff confidence levels and insight into potential patient reactions have risen

Researchers have also picked up that the types of questions patients may ask about a study aren't necessarily what they assume would be a patient's key concerns

RCs have enjoyed the opportunity to remain involved in supporting research in a virtual environment, and are keen for the project to continue as an open-ended offer beyond the pandemic

RCs see this as a way of having their opinions taken on board early in the research process, helping to change the language or approach used when engaging with patients.

Resources available to share

Guidance document

Researcher request form

Evaluation form

3-month evaluation follow up with staff

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