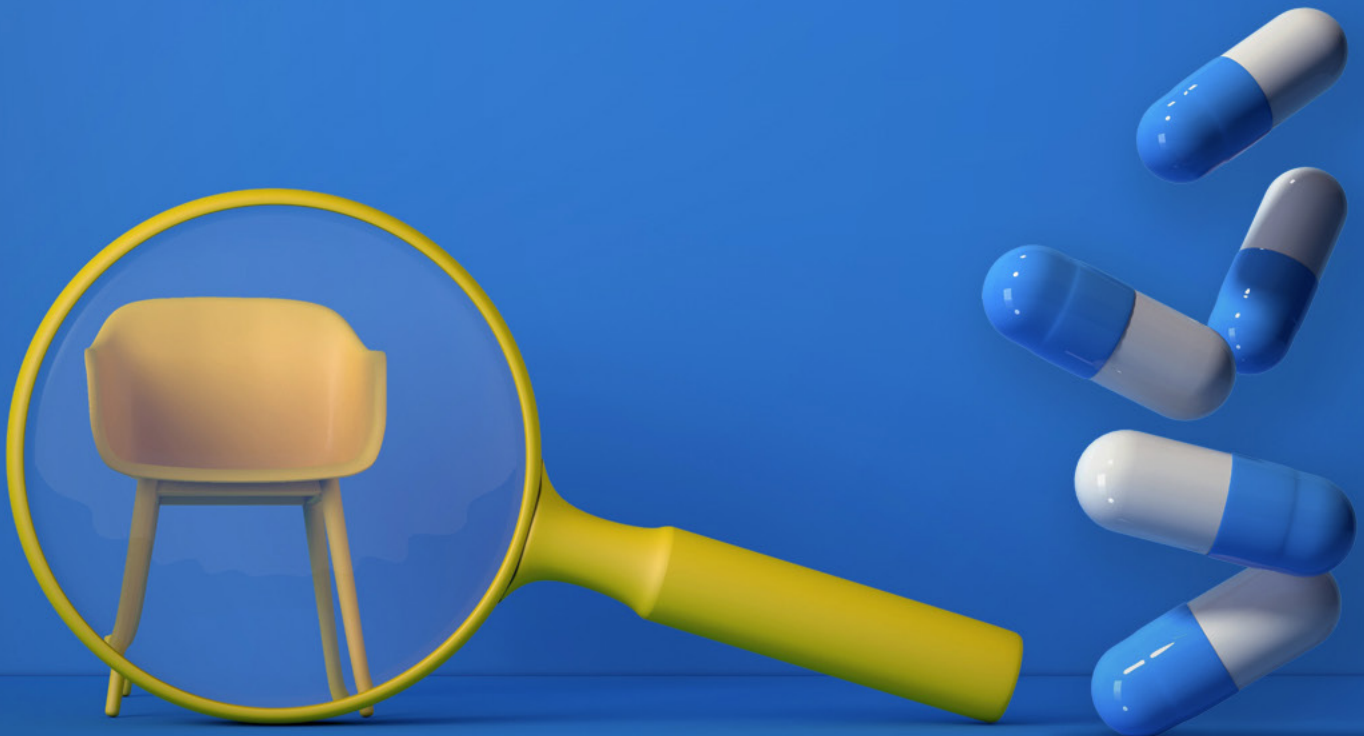




Reimagining Clinical Trial Recruitment:

Emerging Trends and Strategic Solutions

As the fall season approaches, research sponsors and sites are gearing up for an intense hiring period in preparation for the flu trial season while facing the ongoing talent shortage in clinical research. With the added complexities of COVID-19 and RSV, the demand for skilled clinical research staff is greater than ever. Read on to explore the latest trends impacting clinical trial recruitment, discover strategies to ramp up hiring, and learn how to recruit participants effectively.



The Current State of Clinical Trial Staffing

The clinical research landscape continues to face unprecedented challenges, particularly in recruiting and retaining skilled staff. For every trained clinical researcher looking for work in the United States, recruiters are trying to fill approximately seven open positions, with recruitment for certain specialized roles even more challenging.

Addressing this issue is crucial, especially since high turnover rates compound this talent shortage. Studies show that roles for patient-facing clinical research professionals are experiencing especially high attrition, averaging double the pre-pandemic turnover rate.⁷ While these issues emphasize the impact of the Great Resignation on the medical sector, they also magnify a major talent gap and many pre-existing concerns within the industry.

The current state of clinical trial recruitment demands systemic solutions and a unified effort to build a sustainable workforce. This is a call to action for industry leaders to address the workforce shortage by investing in the recruitment and long-term development of clinical research professionals.



Roles for patient-facing clinical research professionals are experiencing high attrition.

Challenges in Clinical Trial Staffing

The shortage of skilled clinical research professionals strains existing staff and hampers the initiation and progression of clinical trials. Here we take a deeper look at the multifaceted challenges impacting clinical trial staffing.





The Impact of COVID-19 on Clinical Trial Operations

During the height of the pandemic in 2020, researchers paused or delayed many existing trials as the urgency to find effective treatments and vaccines sparked an unprecedented surge in clinical trials around the world. By February 2021, the COVID-19 evidence database recorded 2,814 randomized trials, most of which were small-scale and had not yet published results.⁵

As the number of trial initiations began to normalize, the medical industry faced a new challenge: the Great Resignation. A rise in the number of experienced clinical research staff leaving their positions led to a critical shortage at a time when research organizations were trying to catch up on pandemic-delayed research from the previous year.⁸ This increased workload, coupled with understaffed teams, left many organizations struggling to keep pace with their research objectives.

However, the pandemic also prompted significant innovations in trial conduct. New methodologies facilitated recruitment, consent, and overall trial operations under pandemic conditions. Adaptive trial designs, integration into clinical care, and enhanced collaborative structures emerged as key lessons.



Seasonal Staffing Challenges in Clinical Trials

Staffing for flu trials presents a unique set of challenges that necessitate careful planning and resource allocation. During flu season, healthcare resources are often stretched thin, making the recruitment and staffing for clinical trials particularly complex. The increased demand for healthcare services during this time exacerbates the situation and finding available and willing staff to take on additional responsibilities of flu trials becomes a daunting task. This challenge is further compounded by the prevalent burnout among healthcare workers, who are often overworked and under significant stress during flu season.

Additionally, the ongoing shortages of healthcare professionals across various positions add another layer of difficulty to staffing flu trials. With many healthcare workers already spread thin across essential services, recruiting additional personnel for clinical trials requires robust strategies to attract and retain qualified staff. Effective management of these challenges involves not only strategic recruitment efforts but also providing support and incentives to mitigate burnout and encourage participation. Ensuring that clinical trials are adequately staffed during flu season is crucial for the timely and successful execution of these trials, which ultimately contribute to advancing our understanding and treatment of influenza.

Strategies for Effective Clinical Trial Staffing



Collaborative Partnerships

Forming partnerships with academic institutions, research organizations, and CROs can provide access to a broader pool of expertise and resources, enhancing the trial's capability to address complex scientific and logistical challenges.



Flexible Staffing Models

Partnering with trusted staffing agencies that specialize in clinical trials can quickly provide qualified candidates, reducing the time and effort needed for recruitment. Staffing partners with flexible staffing models, such as part-time and contract-based employees, also allow for scaling the team up or down based on the trial's phase and workload, optimizing resource utilization and cost management.



Succession Planning

Preparing for potential staff turnover by developing a succession plan ensures that critical roles are always covered, minimizing disruptions and maintaining trial continuity.



Technology Integration

Leveraging [clinical trial management systems \(CTMS\)](#) and other digital tools can enhance data management, streamline workflows, and reduce administrative burdens on staff preventing employee burnout.



Prioritize Current Staff Well-being

Providing comprehensive training and professional development opportunities, fostering a collaborative and supportive work environment, implementing recognition and incentive programs, and involving staff in decision making are all simple ways to keep current staff well-being top of mind.

Trends Impacting Clinical Trial Patient Recruitment

COVID-19 and flu season aren't the only major concerns impacting clinical trial recruitment. **Several other trends** are reshaping recruitment strategies and participant engagement.



An Increase in Digital and Remote Trials

The shift toward digital and remote trials has gained momentum as demand rises for flexibility and accessibility. Remote participation offers convenience for participants while expanding the reach of clinical trials beyond traditional healthcare settings. This move to digital and remote trials transforms research, requiring staff to adapt to new technologies and, in some cases, redefine their roles.



A Push for Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and inclusion have also become priorities in clinical trial recruitment. As research organizations strive to increase diversity among participants, clinical research staff must consider barriers to participation, including socioeconomic factors and cultural issues. This may involve targeted outreach strategies, creating culturally sensitive recruitment materials, and fostering trust with underrepresented communities. It also requires staff to undergo cultural competency training.



A Rise in Advanced Healthcare Technologies

Advanced technologies, such as wearable devices that monitor patients remotely, are now collecting greater amounts of data. These innovations enable real-time tracking, resulting in more accurate trial assessments. Electronic consent and virtual trial platforms also have the potential to increase trial accessibility and reduce administrative burdens. However, research shows that **72% of healthcare IT leaders** have expressed concern about the talent shortage as these advanced technologies require candidates with new skill sets to implement them.

Strategies for Effective Patient Recruitment

From understanding the nuances of the patient journey to using targeted marketing techniques, each of the following strategies can enhance engagement and streamline the recruitment process.

Understand the Patient Journey

A robust clinical trial recruitment strategy starts with having an in-depth understanding of the patient journey.⁴ Look for insights from focus groups, data analysis, and community engagement to steer you in the right direction. This information can help you create tailored messaging for potential participants and clinical research job candidates, making them feel seen and valued. By constantly monitoring and adapting your strategies based on real-time feedback, you ensure that every step of the process meets the needs of the people you're trying to recruit.

Leverage Marketing Funnels and Audience Segmentation

By mapping out each stage of the patient's experience, from initial awareness and consideration to advocacy, healthcare providers can adapt their outreach efforts to meet participants where they are. This involves analyzing patient demographics, lifestyle choices, and previous study engagement to create targeted messaging. Leveraging audience segmentation allows for precise communication with potential participants, ensuring the right message reaches the right people at the right time. Whether through social media platforms, targeted emails, or engagement with online support groups, personalized outreach maximizes the impact of recruitment efforts.¹

Build Robust Communication Strategies

Building robust communication strategies with potential clinical trial participants begins by compiling and analyzing patient data to construct a detailed patient profile. Integrating feedback from focus groups and online community interactions can further refine these strategies, ensuring communications are informative and resonate on a personal level. By establishing clear channels of communication with potential participants, research teams can streamline the recruitment process, leading to faster enrollment and reduced trial delays.

Elevate Your Clinical Trials With Strategic Staffing Solutions

As we head into the flu season, demand for skilled clinical research staff is still high. At Medix, our tailored recruitment services can help you streamline operations and maximize efficiency. Whether you need temporary staff to propel your clinical trials forward during this busy period or a long-term solution to support your growing team, we're here to help. [Discuss your needs with a Medix hiring specialist today.](#)

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