

SWAT 10: Skype videoconferences to improve site engagement in multi-centre randomised trials

Objective of this SWAT

To compare trial quality metrics (recruitment, retention and data quality) for centres receiving Skype-based 'visits' from the central trial team versus those receiving traditional site visits.

Study area: Randomisation; Recruitment; Data quality.

Sample type: Trial team.

Estimated funding level needed: Very low.

Background

Maintaining engagement with sites in a multi-centre randomised trial can be challenging, but good engagement might make a trial more efficient and reduce waste. New technologies such as Skype videoconferences might provide a low-cost alternative to in-person site visits.

Interventions and comparators

Intervention 1: Periodic Skype videoconferences (perhaps every three months) between the central trial team and staff at each site. These videoconferences might cover topics such as data verification, completion and accuracy; recruitment and retention (including adherence to trial interventions and follow-up procedures).

Intervention 2: In-person site visits by the central trial team, perhaps once per year. These site visits might cover topics such as data verification, completion and accuracy; recruitment and retention (including adherence to trial interventions and follow-up procedures).

Index Type: Visit

Method for allocating to intervention or comparator

Randomisation.

Outcome measures

Primary outcomes: (1) Recruitment rate per year in each group: number of patients recruited overall and the proportion of the anticipated rate for each site). (2) Retention in each group: proportion of randomised patients who (a) continue on their trial intervention and (b) provide final outcome data.

Secondary outcomes: (1) Number of missing data items in each group. (2) Number of data entry errors identified in each group. (3) Costs of monitoring in each group.

Analysis plans

Analysis will be by intention to treat. Comparisons between randomised groups will be by t-tests or Mann-Whitney tests, as appropriate for parametric or non-parametric comparisons, depending on the distribution of the data.

Possible problems in implementing this SWAT

If site visits are required for monitoring purposes, the SWAT might become an assessment of the addition of Skype videoconferences to in-person sites; unless the monitoring visits can be delayed in those centres allocated to Skype videoconferences.

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