

Ethics, Trust, & Engagement

Addressing the Challenges of Clinical Trial Diversity



The initial workshop in our series started with a presentation by Dr. James Hildreth, President and CEO of Meharry Medical College. Dr. Hildreth's presentation Health Disparities and Minority Participation in Clinical Research set the stage for focused discussion of the issues impacting clinical trial diversity. The presentation outlined critical barriers in access to clinical trials by minority participants including mistrust, lack of comfort with the clinical trial process, lack of information about clinical trials, time and resource constraints associated with participation, and lack of clinical trial awareness. Despite these barriers Dr. Hildreth also suggested that more diverse clinical trial participation could be achieved through enhanced direct communication with patients, more diverse scientists, greater sponsor and primary investigator accountability, and more confidence that change can happen. Dr. Hildreth's presentation was followed by stakeholder breakout discussions which covered the following issues and questions:

Patient Awareness, Education, and Motivation

How can we address the history of unethical practices and inform patients of the current ethical practices in place to improve patient willingness to participate in clinical research?

What educational and outreach tools are needed to increase patient awareness about clinical trials?

How can we better understand the interests and possible motivations of different patients and communities to participate in research?

Importance of Clinical Trial Messaging and Recruitment Strategies

Where have traditional recruitment methods fallen short?

How do we improve messaging to address patient concerns about participating in clinical trials?

What recruitment and messaging (e.g., language, terminology) strategies are needed to engage more diverse patients in clinical research? What are some examples of success?

Enrollment Priorities and the Impact on Diverse Patient Recruitment

What modifications to enrollment priorities are needed to improve recruitment of diverse patients?

How does prioritizing diverse enrollment impact patient access to medical technologies and diagnostics?

What regional considerations should factor into recruitment?

The breakout discussions resulted in the identification of approaches and strategies that the attendees view as critical in addressing and combatting issues related to recruitment and engagement of more diverse patients in clinical research. The following approaches, associated with the thematic areas guiding the various discussions, were identified:

Patient Awareness, Education, and Motivation

Identify and collaborate with community hubs on outreach

Emphasize and maintain two-way communication

Utilize direct engagement and questioning

Establish relationships and repeat outreach

Acknowledge historical atrocities and educate prospective participants around existing guardrails

Show the direct value of research to diverse and underserved communities

Be authentic in efforts to increase the diversity of clinical research; ensure words match the actions (short-term and long-term)

Importance of Clinical Trial Messaging and Recruitment Strategies

Recruit in non-traditional sites to develop comradery and trust

Have patients co-collaborate with physicians on trials so they are vested and more likely to follow through

Empower patients and providers by making education about clinical research accessible

Enrollment Priorities and the Impact on Diverse Patient Recruitment

Lead with trust and integrity

Create trust among investigators and physicians

Be intentional and inclusive in setting goals and targets

Educate and train investigators to be sensitive to the need for diversity

Have and use diverse investigators

Plan in advance so that participant diversity is not compromised by time demands

Go to where patients are to recruit diverse patients