

SWAT 19: Prompting participants to return baseline questionnaires to improve the provision of follow-up information in trials

Objective of this SWAT

To determine whether the presence of prompts to return questionnaires affects the number of participants retained to the study at the final data collection point.

Study area: Retention; Follow-up.

Sample type: Participants.

Estimated funding level needed: Low (depending on the types of prompt used).

Background

Trials of online interventions which use postal questionnaires tend to recruit participants who have greater 'commitment' to the trial, as more effort is required to return a physical questionnaire than using online hosted questionnaires. However, it is not known whether prompting might affect the rate of return of the first questionnaire, or lead to a higher drop-out rate at the final data collection point, if the prompt encourages the return of the first questionnaire, but does not increase commitment to the trial overall. This SWAT will explore whether prompting people to return their baseline or follow-up questionnaires affects the proportion who do so.

Interventions and comparators

Intervention 1: Predetermined prompting schedule for return of questionnaires, for example by telephone, email or post.

Intervention 2: No prompting.

Index Type: Method of Follow-up

Method for allocating to intervention or comparator

Randomisation.

Outcome measures

Primary outcomes: Retention (proportion of individuals returning final questionnaire).

Secondary outcomes: Recruitment rates (proportion of individuals returning the first questionnaire, if this is part of the baseline assessment to recruit participants to the study).

Analysis plans

2 x 2 Chi-square analysis.

Possible problems in implementing this SWAT

Choice of prompt will impact on the cost of implementation and time required. The ethical and consent challenges of not informing a subset of the participants about the compensation or about the SWAT.

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