

# Tapping Social Media for Clinical Trial Recruitment

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## Abstracts

With an estimated 80% of all clinical trials failing to achieve enrolment goals, sponsors are constantly seeking new and better techniques to attract the right patients.

In 2011, nearly one in every five minutes spent online was in “Social Media”, representing 1.2 billion users around the globe. What if this revolutionary change in the way that consumers interact, as well as the growth of online patient communities, could be harnessed for clinical trial recruitment?

Firms such as Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Novartis, and Avanir have gone public with the fact they have already turned to Social Media for help in recruiting. So have governmental research entities and non-profit investigators.

However, this has been a particularly tricky development for the pharmaceutical industry, because while there are strict rules on just what a drug maker can say about its products, those rules have not been adapted by regulators to the new online environment.

How are investigators harnessing Social Media for trial recruiting, while managing to comply with unclear regulations?

## Report Overview

Tapping Social Media for Clinical Trial Recruitment is an essential, practical guide to understanding why and how trial recruiters are using Social Media channels to reach target patients.

The report begins by outlining the arguments for using this avenue for recruiting, including characteristics of Social Media users that can make them particularly receptive

to trial notifications. It then moves beyond the theory to spotlight how Pharma is actually using Social Media as a recruiting tool – a development further detailed in four recent case studies of Social Media recruiting success stories. Two main approaches to using Social Media emerge from these examples – immediate recruitment and long-term relationship-building.

The problems – manifest and potential – to this recruiting route are reviewed in detail; key challenges include limited official guidance, risks of sending an “invitation”, privacy issues, and dealing with ethics committees.

Finally, the report suggests where Social Media clinical trial recruitment may be heading next, and how Pharma can be ready for those changes.

## **Key Report Features**

The latest data and behavioural trends in Social Media usage

Guidance on planning a Social Media presence

Examples of how trial sponsors are already using social media recruiting

Handy checklist of ways to engage your audience through Social Media

Detailed advice on potential problems, including lack of regulations, privacy issues, and concerns about promotion of off-label indications

Predictions for the next big developments in behaviour and attitudes

Four Pharma Case Studies – on using Social Media to find patients with a rare disease, and to recruit candidates for Phase II, Phase IIb and Phase III trials

## **Who Would Benefit From This Report?**

Pharma Clinical Trial Directors

Directors of clinical trial recruitment firms

Directors of contract research organizations

Marketing Directors at Social Media companies

IT consultants

Research Directors at nonprofit disease-specific support organizations

Communications Consultants

Thought-leaders and health policy think tanks

Policy Directors and Governmental Regulators

Executive Secretaries for institutional review boards

## **Key Questions Answered**

Is Social Media a useful recruiting pathway for this clinical trial?

If so, which sites are most appropriate and which approach will be most productive?

How can I minimize exposure to regulatory problems?

How can I use efficacy results to adjust my approach to social media?

When does the IRB need to be involved?

## **Key Benefits**

Learn from successful efforts in using Social Media for trial recruitment

Understand when Social Media is an appropriate channel, and when it is less so

Receive practical advice on what social media to use in different situations

Be aware of potential legal and ethical pitfalls

Be ready for future developments

## Key quotes

“These are powerful communication tools that make it possible to do old work in new ways.” – Lee Aase, director of the Mayo Clinic Center for Social Media

“I think social networks are too big to ignore, and two years from now I think pharma companies are going to be in a different place than they are today.” – Liz Moench, president, MediciGlobal

“I think privacy is the most important thing we do ... The most important thing is that the members choose what is done with their personal information.” – Brian Loew, CEO, Inspire

## Expert Views

Lee Aase, director; Mayo Clinic Center for Social Media

Bonnie Brescia, founding principal; BBK

Susannah Fox, associate director; Pew Internet & American Life Project

Rahlyn Gossen, owner; Rebar Interactive

Nick Halkitis, vice-president, digital strategy; MediciGlobal

Benjamin Heywood, president, PatientsLikeMe

Soyon Im, manager, Internet Strategies; HIV Vaccine Trials Network

Dr. Randall E. Kaye, CMO; Avanir Pharmaceuticals

Brian Loew, CEO; Inspire

Liz Moench, president; MediciGlobal

Thomas B.K. Ringe III, partner; Duane Morris

David Rosen, co-chair, Life Sciences Industry Team; Foley Lardner

Dr. Bert Spilker, president; Stroke-Med

## Contents

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

### **PROMISE**

Why social media recruiting looks like a good idea

The big numbers

Breaking down the numbers

An engaged population

Planning a social media presence

Matching platform and audience

Seeing is believing

Act now; act later?

Case Study 1: Using social media to assess feasibility of reaching participants with a very rare disease

### **PRACTICE**

How trial sponsors are using social media recruiting

Option one: immediate recruiting

Option two: building relationships

10 simple steps

Shaping the trial itself

Case Study 2: Using social media to recruit patients for a Phase II trial of a non-small cell lung cancer drug

### **PITFALLS**

Potential problems to consider in social media recruiting

The limited official guidance

The risks of an invitation

Be careful about overpromising

Privacy issues

Dealing with ethics committees

Case Study 3: Using social media to recruit healthy volunteers for a Phase IIb trial

## **PROSPECT**

What the future holds for social media recruiting

Pharma rethinking

The one constant: change

Changing attitudes

The challenge for sponsors

Case Study 4: Using social media to recruit patients for a Phase III trial

The questions to ask

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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