

IBTN Conference 2022 Abstract Submission

Title: Retention-related perspectives of senior trial stakeholders: A qualitative exploration

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Background: Data suggest 20+% of trial participants terminate early. Emerging initiatives like STEER/PRIORiTY II have begun to address this, but research on suboptimal retention remains limited. No research has explored trial stakeholders' retention-related perspectives, which may influence participant-related decision-making and associated retention outcomes.

Objective: This PPI-in-nature study aimed to address this gap via qualitative exploration of retention-related perspectives of senior stakeholders, purposively sampled within clinical research organisations – by examining what role, if any, retention-related attention plays.

Methods: Eight semi-structured virtual interviews were conducted (~30 mins/interview). Transcripts were coded, initial review undertaken, then thematically analysed by two authors.

Results: Three core themes/findings emerged: 1) In a clear example of *self-serving bias*, all stakeholders accepted that poor retention is common, but rejected that the trials they oversee suffer attrition; 2) Relationships between trial site staff and patients are *critical* for retention, but specific retention training is rarely offered for site staff; and 3) Stakeholders endorsed the well-established notion that retention improves when the trial process is streamlined for patients.

Conclusion: Early data suggest trial managers and site staff are untrained, unsupported, or display unconscious bias towards their efficacy in optimising retention. This highlights the need for a multi-stakeholder (vs patient-only) approach. While this study was a useful first step, comprehensive work building upon this should now be undertaken.