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P001 -Challenges and successes of recruiting to a large cohort study - a research team's experience

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Challenges and successes of recruiting to a large cohort study – a research team’s experience

Introduction: Recruitment into research studies can often be challenging. Under- recruiting to a study can compromise the validity of the results, increase costs, delay or even cause early termination of the study. Here we describe our experience of recruiting to a large cohort study, discuss the process, the challenges we faced, what went well and make recommendations for future practice.

Methods: The NURTuRE-CKD study is a Multicentre prospective cohort study to investigate determinants of and risk factors for clinically important adverse outcomes in people with chronic kidney disease. We were given a site target to recruit 300 participants in 12 months. Our strategy was to screen the 2 largest general nephrology clinics. We then sent out invitation letters and information sheets to all eligible patients; patients were then contacted by telephone. If the patients were willing to participate, they were booked in to have their baseline visit on the day of their nephrology appointment. Our team consists of 2 research nurses, a research practitioner, a research HCA and a lab technician. The baseline visit initially took around an hour to complete, one or two of the team would carry out the visit then blood and urine samples were taken to the laboratory and processed by a laboratory technician.

Results: Recruitment to the study initially was slow. We started by screening a large number of patients a few weeks in advance of their clinic date but found patients were forgetting or rearranging their clinic appointments and not informing us. We then decided to screen just one week in advance and contact patients a few days before their clinic appointment. We found this to be a much better system. Another issue we had was patients not waiting after their clinic appointment. We found that approaching patients when they arrived in the clinic helped and also giving a list to the clinic nurses so they could inform us when the patients were ready to be seen. Patients valued having their study visits at the same time as routine appointments as this avoids extra visits to the hospital. We reached our 300 target in June of 2018, just short of the 12 month time frame (Figure). It was then decided to continue recruitment to further support the study. To date we have recruited 486 participants during 18 months, 143 of which are diabetic and 72 have had a recent kidney biopsy.

Discussion: Overall the teamwork and commitment to this study has been exceptional, each member of the team has found their role and together we have streamlined a successful system which has enabled us to hit our recruitment target for this study. We have tried different strategies for inviting participants and have identified one that works best locally. We hope to continue with our success and transfer our knowledge and experience to other studies in the future.