

Publication

Ethical Issues in Social Media Recruitment for Clinical Studies: Ethical Analysis and Framework.

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Social media recruitment for clinical studies holds the promise of being a cost-effective way of attracting traditionally marginalized populations and promoting patient engagement with researchers and a particular study. However, using social media for recruiting clinical study participants also poses a range of ethical issues.; This study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the ethical benefits and risks to be considered for social media recruitment in clinical studies and develop practical recommendations on how to implement these considerations.; On the basis of established principles of clinical ethics and research ethics, we reviewed the conceptual and empirical literature for ethical benefits and challenges related to social media recruitment. From these, we derived a conceptual framework to evaluate the eligibility of social media use for recruitment for a specific clinical study.; We identified three eligibility criteria for social media recruitment for clinical studies: information and consent, risks for target groups, and recruitment effectiveness. These criteria can be used to evaluate the implementation of a social media recruitment strategy at its planning stage. We have discussed the practical implications of these criteria for researchers.; The ethical challenges related to social media recruitment are context sensitive. Therefore, social media recruitment should be planned rigorously, taking into account the target group, the appropriateness of social media as a recruitment channel, and the resources available to execute the strategy.

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