

Conducting clinical trials in accident and emergency medicine – a pilot study highlights recruitment challenges

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INTRODUCTION:

- Conducting clinical research in the accident and emergency environment poses particular challenges.
- The pilot study of a randomised controlled trial of mechanical supports following severe ankle sprains has recently been completed in the A&E department of a West Midlands hospital.

AIMS:

- The aim of the pilot study of the ankle trial was to identify challenges to recruitment in research trials carried out within the Accident and Emergency Department setting.

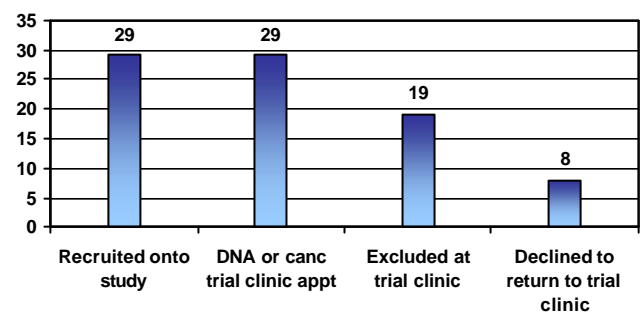
OUTCOME MEASURES:

- A&E clinicians were asked to identify patients with severe ankle sprains and refer these patients to a 'trial clinic'.
- At the trial clinic patients were consented and recruited onto the trial.
- An ankle assessment proforma was designed to assist assessment and act as a tracking instrument to identify whether clinicians were referring appropriate patients.

RESULTS:

- During the 5-week pilot phase, 85 patients were referred to the trial clinic.

OUTCOME OF REFERRAL	NUMBER OF PATIENTS (%)
Recruited onto study	29 (34%)
DNA or cancelled appt	29 (34%)
Excluded at trial clinic	19 (22%)
Declined to return to clinic	8 (9%)



CONCLUSIONS:

The high rate of exclusion at trial clinics was due to 'severe' sprains diagnosed in A&E turning out to be less serious injuries.

- The assessment proforma was well received and has proved to be a useful tool for tracking recruitment.
- The pilot study confirms the challenges faced by researchers in the busy and changeable environment of the A&E department.

Full details of the project are available at:

www.emergencycare.org.uk

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