

The effectiveness of direct to public advertising on recruitment rates in the PATCH I trial



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Background



The PATCH I randomised controlled trial investigated whether taking low dose penicillin daily for 12 months can prevent recurrence of cellulitis of the leg in patients who had previously suffered at least 2 episodes.

Recruitment to PATCH I began in July 2006 and, by the end of February 2009, 143 individuals had been randomised. This represented 52% of the overall target of 260 and left just 10 months in which to find the remaining 117 participants. The trial was in serious danger of being underpowered and the clock was ticking.



Publicity

Our publicity campaign had a great kick start when BBC Radio Nottingham agreed to a radio interview with Professor Hywel Williams. This resulted in 36 enquiries and 5 new recruits.

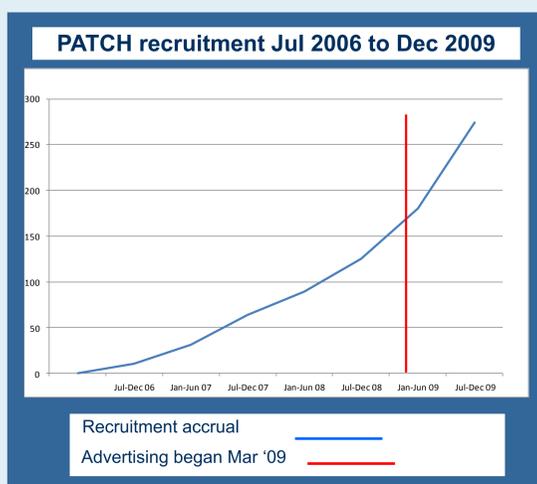
Spurred on by this success, we advertised in Nottingham newspapers soon afterwards, generating 159 enquiries from our local area.

We then moved further afield, placing adverts across the UK. We selected locations near participating hospitals, where we knew there was a high level of support from research staff. All initial enquiries were handled by the trial team; additional funding ensured sufficient administrative staff to deal with the resulting >500 initial enquiries.

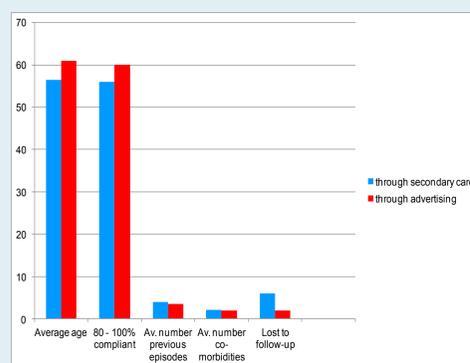
Results

In the final 10 months of the trial, 131 participants were randomised :

64 through secondary care
and
67 through advertising



We examined data belonging to participants randomised between March and December 2009 and found that, in terms of average age, disease history, compliance and retention, there was no significant difference between the two cohorts.



PATCH I - numbers of participants randomised from July 2006 to December 2009



Participants who joined PATCH I after responding to direct to public advertising represented almost 25% of the overall number recruited.

Have you had cellulitis of the leg?

Cellulitis is a common and painful infection of the skin and, once you've had an attack, it is quite likely to happen again. Researchers at the University of Nottingham are carrying out a study to find out if 12 months of low dose penicillin can prevent cellulitis recurring. If the patients taking penicillin get fewer attacks of cellulitis than those on dummy tablets, it would mean that this simple treatment could improve the quality of life of the thousands of people in the UK who suffer from repeat attacks of cellulitis.

Would you like to help us with our research study?

We are recruiting locally to you

To find out more, email: patch@nottingham.ac.uk



Acknowledgements:

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Our grateful thanks to the PATCH trial team, participating hospitals and all the PATCH participants

References:

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- Recruitment to randomised trials: strategies for trial enrolment and participant study. The STEPS study. M K Campbell et al. *Health Technology Assessment* 2007; Vol. **11**: No. 48