

Navigating the Path: The Recruitment Process for Gardening Research with Cancer Patients in the Klang Valley

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ABSTRACT

The need for customised approaches to engage older cancer patients and the insight garnered from patient-centred care pathways and exercise intervention trials have been beneficial in understanding effective recruiting techniques. This document offers a succinct summary of the obstacles and complications that are linked to the recruitment of elderly individuals who have been diagnosed with cancer. Our methodology is founded on a model that explicitly addresses the challenges and opportunities associated with recruiting individuals from the research community and the special population. At the outset of the investigation, potential enablers and barriers in prior research are identified. Participants recruitment was recorded in a logbook detailing contacts with parties who are related to cancer patients and senior adults, which was subjected to content analysis to examine recruitment barriers and facilitators. The finding shows that successful recruitment transpires when the objectives of certain populations coincide with those of the scientific community. Recruiting cancer patients necessitates considerable time and effort; nonetheless, retention remains high, despite some individuals declining interviews due to fear. Trust is essential, given the persistent stigma

surrounding cancer. Overcoming obstacles, including gatekeepers' interests and participants' availability, is essential for effective recruitment techniques.

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INTRODUCTION

Participating in research is difficult for elderly cancer patients. Chronic diseases can complicate aged cancer treatment (Ploeg et al., 2019; Sien et al., 2024). Transportation obstacles, psychological issues including fear and trial procedure misunderstanding, and feelings of alienation from care decisions can all hamper enrolment (Hestevik et al., 2020; Wright, 2017). Low health literacy, lack of awareness of supportive care options, and misconceptions regarding clinical trials and their benefits can lead to unmet treatment needs (Puts et al., 2012). These issues require new communication and recruitment strategies. This paper discusses the challenges of recruiting elderly cancer patients into horticultural programs and suggests solutions.

METHODS

The study used a combination of purposive and snowball sampling to recruit older cancer patients aged 60 and above in Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, and Putrajaya. The purposive sampling targeted individuals aged 60 or older, diagnosed with cancer within five years, and engaged in gardening activities. Snowball sampling involved referring eligible individuals from their social or support networks. A detailed logbook was maintained to manage appointments, ensuring regular follow-up and confirmation. This strategy enhanced the study's reliability and comprehensiveness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study found that linking personal goals with scientific community aims and fostering trust boosts engagement among older adult cancer patients. Participants often wish to contribute to the research that reflects their experiences and goals, highlighting the goal alignment. These findings support previous research indicating societal advantages and institutional prestige may drive a health research engagement (Goodman et al., 2019). Cancer's stigma and death might also inhibit frank dialogues. In contrast, trust reduces anxiety and increases participation, creating a good research atmosphere.

Gatekeepers' personal interests, participants' research knowledge, and their individual and medical availability were the main hurdles to participation. The gatekeepers who lead recruitment efforts may have competing interests, limiting participation. Potential volunteers must understand the research to avoid uncertainty and mistrust (Nueces et al., 2012). Many cancer patients may face personal and medical challenges that limit their availability (Abshire et al., 2017).

Well-coordinated research teams can improve participant retention despite recruitment delays. This study found that participants appreciated the experience, highlighting its potential advantages. Anxiety can prevent some people from attending interviews (Wang et

al., 2023). Despite these challenges, this study's participants enjoyed gardening, suggesting that therapeutic activities might offer joy and normalcy to cancer treatment.

CONCLUSION

Personal alignment with research goals and trust motivates particular populations to participate in cancer research. Gatekeeper interests and participant availability must be addressed to improve recruitment and retention. The findings emphasize the necessity of recognizing elderly cancer patients' unique issues and the possibility of therapeutic activities to encourage research participation. Recruiting older cancer patients for research is challenging due to physical and emotional barriers. Policies should promote accessible activities like gardening to support their well-being and research participation.

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