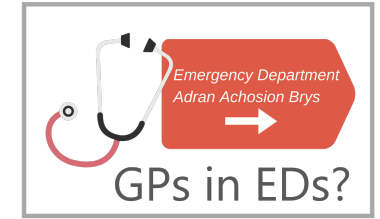


Challenges of recruiting emergency department patients to a qualitative study: a thematic analysis of researchers' experiences



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Background:

At times of increasing pressure on emergency departments, there is a need for research into patients' experiences of different models of service delivery. The GPs in EDs study planned to collect qualitative evidence on the effectiveness of different GP-ED models, including the impact on patient experience. **However, challenges were faced in recruiting sufficient numbers of patients.**

We aim to:

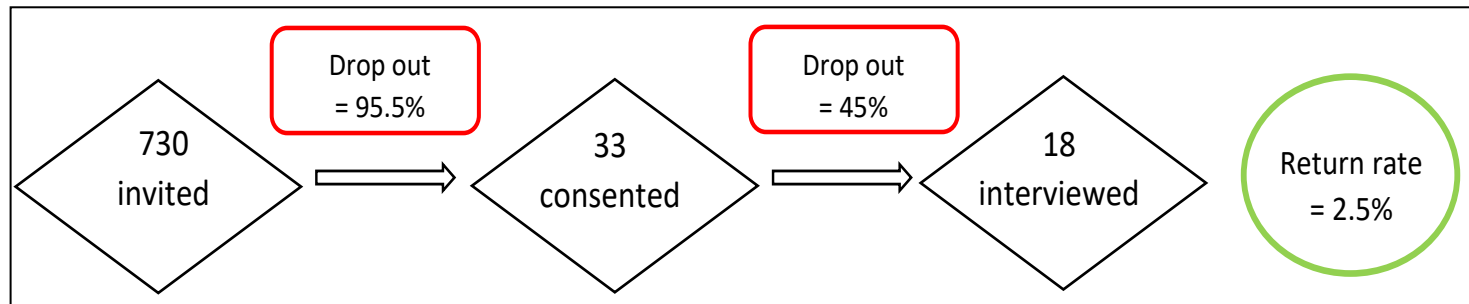
- Describe factors which influenced patient recruitment in the GPs in EDs study.
- Explore key challenges and consequent amendments made to our recruitment processes.
- Propose recommendations for future patient recruitment in a similar setting.



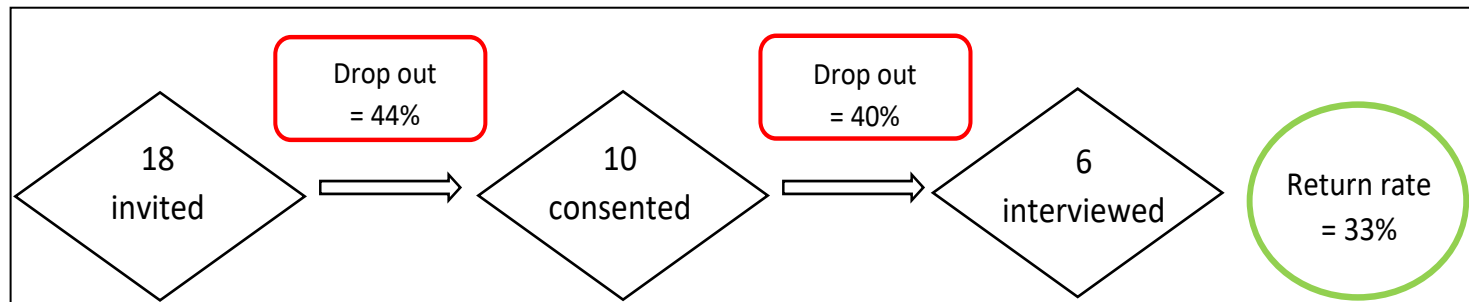
Patient Recruitment:

A total of **748** patients were invited, and **24** interviewed

Patients recruited via postal invitations:



Patients recruited via face-to-face invitations:



Methods of analysing patient recruitment challenges:

We carried out a thematic analysis of:

- Field notes from research visits to 13 emergency departments in England and Wales (totalling 26 sets of in-depth field notes).
- Documents from a range of study meetings (progress reports and meeting minutes), including meetings with patient and public involvement representatives.

Findings & future recommendations:

We found the following factors negatively impacted patient recruitment:

| Findings | Future recommendations |
|--|--|
| Complicated or time-consuming electronic health record systems for identifying patients. | Implementation of ECDS in Emergency Departments will ensure better quality data on presenting complaints and diagnoses. |
| Narrow participant eligibility criteria. | Broadening eligibility criteria, e.g. searching by presenting complaint OR diagnoses, to enable more participants to be invited and thus recruited. |
| Limited research nurse support. | Good contact before research visits to build rapport and ensure understanding of research; carrying out practical preparations to lessen burden on hospital. |
| Lack of face-to-face communication between researchers and eligible patients | Implement face-to-face recruitment methods in research design, allowing patients to give consent during their ED visit rather than via post at a later date. |

Conclusion:

Our findings add to the methodological evidence for improving patient recruitment in different settings, with implications for future studies attempting to recruit patients in similar settings.

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