

Recruitment and adaption during COVID-19

By Matthew Jones; Research Project Support Officer, Bangor University

What is FEMuR III

FEMuR III is a randomised control trial which aimed to determine the effectiveness of an enhanced rehabilitation programme following surgical repair of proximal hip fracture.

Inclusion criteria and initial design

Participants aged 60 years or older
 Recent hip fracture/surgery
 Living in their own home prior to fracture
 Normal NHS care
 v
 Advanced care (up to 6 additional therapy sessions and use of a workbook and diary)

Impact of COVID-19

Due to FEMuR recruiting from an elderly population, COVID-19 had a significant impact on:
 • Recruitment from hospitals
 • Follow up assessments
 • Rehabilitation



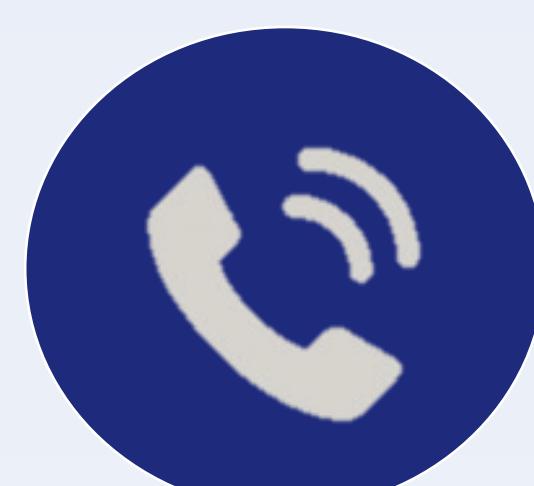
Postal Services

- Workbook and diaries were sent to participants on the enhanced group
- If phone calls were not viable, follow up assessments were sent to participants for self-completion



COVID-19

- Majority of hospital sites across the UK were forced to halt recruitment
- The initial wave lasted 6 months
- Further COVID waves caused sites to close again throughout 2021
- Adaption to the study was needed to continue recruitment and complete follow ups safely.
- Recruitment during COVID gradually improved once adaption was implemented



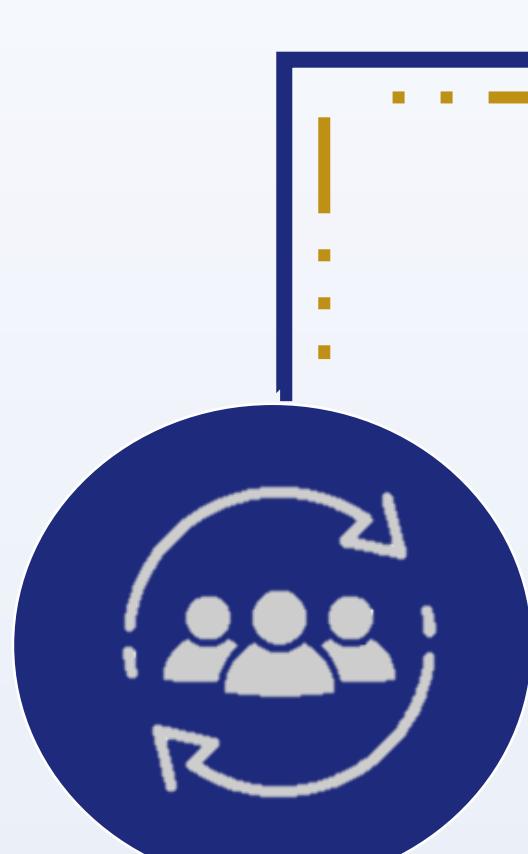
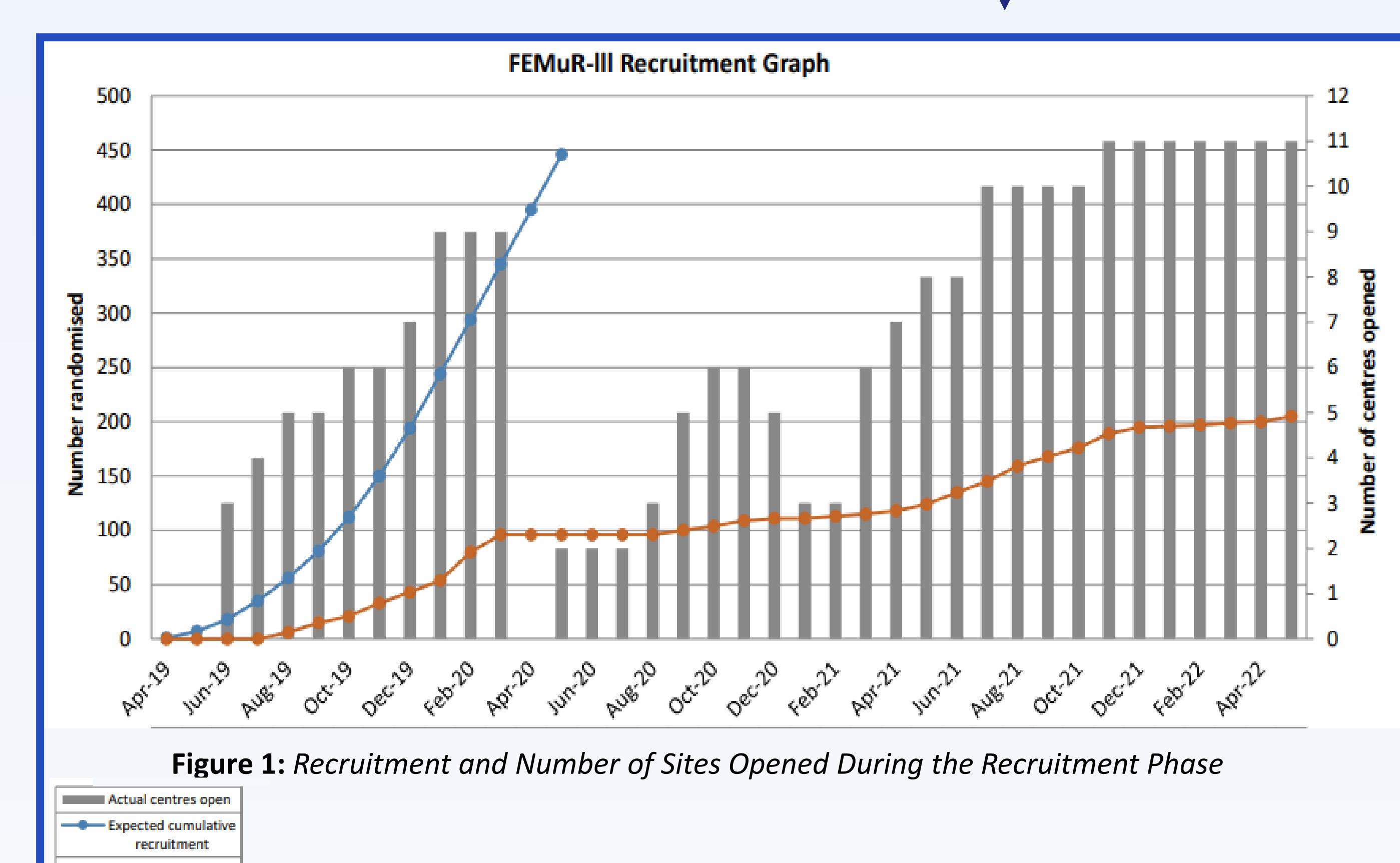
Phone calls

- Quickly became the new method of contacting patients
- Phone calls helped create a remote intervention for therapy staff and research staff
- Used as a way to remind patients of their participation
- More appealing to a number of patients
- Limited face-to-face contact



Study Document update

- Study documents such as the PISC and follow up assessment sheets were updated and adapted to give patients a clear understanding regarding study procedure and safety during the pandemic.
- Less information was included on information as too much information during an already nervous time for elderly patients could potentially have caused unrest.



Retention

- Lack of face-to-face contact with researchers and hospital staff caused patients to forget about study involvement
- Monthly 'follow up' phone calls helped patients remember study involvement
- Improved mood after a general catch up
- Participants saved researchers number on phone so they knew exactly who was calling
- Follow up appointment sheets were also given to participants

Patient Approach

- Approaching patients during the pandemic was re-shaped
- Remote intervention emphasised to patients worried about participating in a study during the pandemic
- Time of approach essential
- Research staff help to relieve stress and relax patients
- Single person approaches were scrapped as multiple researcher approach improved recruitment rate.
- Approach for consent via phone call and post once patient is in comfort of own home