LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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Science media—the best way to reach the target audience for a pre-clinical AD study

All researchers understand the frustrations of clinical trial recruitment. Pre-generated databases are currently fashionable as a tool, especially for pre-clinical Alzheimer's disease (AD) studies, but little is known of their effectiveness (Grill *et al.*, 2018). When recruiting for the Australian cohort of the Anti-Amyloid Treatment in Asymptomatic Alzheimer's disease study (The A4 Study), we found that a pre-generated database was indeed useful. Also, that continued building of the database was assisted through promotion via science media.

We aimed to recruit 100 eligible participants and began by combing the pre-generated Florey BrainPET database—the result of previous, self-enrollment media drives. We sent invitations to people whose demographics and medical/treatment responses met study criteria ($N = 215$).

We found that this database, dedicated to capturing people interested in brain research, was valuable for recruitment. Only 10% of BrainPET registrants underwent Visit 1 screening, yet formed 25% ($N = 25$) of our final cohort. Although not a pre-characterized sample (recommended by Boada et al., 2018), the database contained enough information to identify people at risk (Pillai and Cummings, 2013) and exclude others. It is unusual for one site to contribute such a large portion of the overall cohort in a multicenter trial. Had we been looking for a smaller group, the database alone would probably have been sufficient.

As we exhausted this database, we presented AD, PET imaging, and/or the A4 study on various television and radio news and current affairs programs ($N = 9$). People were directed to a study specific database or telephone number. A call center was employed to deal with an expected high volume of responders.

We found science media the most rewarding. The Catalyst science program was the best recruiter with 43% of eligible responders undergoing screening. The brief paragraphs in the University of Melbourne newsletters and a flyer placed in Dementia Australia's quarterly magazine provided small numbers, but cumulatively, 42% underwent screening. Word-of-mouth meetings of like-minded people also yielded 42% ($N = 64$). Reaching the target audience for clinical trial recruitment is always the challenge. It would seem that the BrainPET advertising, Catalyst science program, university newsletters, and word of mouth were the means by which to reach individuals interested in AD research, cognizant of the underlying issues.

Other strategies generated a significant initial response that did not translate to actual screening visits to such a degree. Following initial interest, finding out about study commitment saw many withdraw interest. Results are listed in Table 1.

The call center was not beneficial. A random sample of responders was telephoned with mixed results, and all had to be recontacted to ensure that those eligible were included.

Self-enrollment via the internet was efficient, as it reduced costs and time needed for data entry. It also enabled bulk BCC emails to be sent to ineligible participants and efficient growth of the database for future studies through affirmative replies.

In summary, recruitment to secondary prevention studies is indeed assisted by using a targeted database. Self-enrollment via the internet reduces costs, and rebuilding the database is best assisted by advertising through science-focused media.

Conflict of interest

None.

Description of authors' roles

M. Mastwyk designed the study, supervised data collection and analysis, and wrote the paper.

A. Barac collected the data, completed analysis, and reviewed the paper.

Morgan Radler collected the data and reviewed the paper.

Rebecca Sgambellone collected the data and reviewed the paper.

Vasantha Pather Lowen collected the data and reviewed the paper.

Natasha Mitchell collected the data and reviewed the paper.

George Zisis collected the data and reviewed the paper.

Christopher Cleon Rowe generated the pre-existing database and reviewed the paper.

Colin Louis Masters supervised the study and reviewed the paper.

Table 1. Participant recruitment by publicity source

DATE	SOURCE	MEAN AGE	MALE (%)	RESPONSES	ELIGIBLE	DECLINED	SCREENED (%)	SCANNED	PET POSITIVE
Pre-Sep 2014	BrainPET ($N = 942$)	66.5	42.7	942	215	117	98 (45.6%)	69	25
01 Dec 14	*Channel 7 News	67.3	42.6	209	89	63	26 (29.2%)	11	4
17 Mar 15	*Catalyst (science program)	68.9	44.4	567	310	177	133 (42.9%)	88	19
27 Sep 15	*Red Symons (breakfast radio)	67.1	47.9	140	39	25	14 (35.9%)	10	1
31 Oct 15	*A Current Affair	67.8	28.2	39	26	20	6 (23.1%)	1	0
29 Apr 16	**Herald Sun* editorial	70.4	49.0	502	335	234	101 (30.1%)	60	12
28 Apr 16	*774 (morning radio)	70.0	46.7	167	124	90	34 (27.4%)	24	4
28 Apr 16	3AW (morning radio)	66.7	49.0	51	25	18	7 (28.0%)	6	1
Mar-Sep 2016	Brain Matters U3A, *Memory Matters, UniMelb eNews	71.4	38.0	137	88	51	37 (42.0%)	27	6
21 Jul 16	*The Age	60.6	39.5	147	54	40	14 (25.9%)	9	2
21 Sep 16	*7:30 Report	65.8	53.7	134	58	51	7 (12.1%)	7	2
02 Jun 17	The Conversation	63.1	50.0	22	3	3	0 (00.0%)	0	0
	Word of mouth	67.3	32.5	268	151	87	64 (42.4%)	36	8
	Specialist referrals	71.0	49.0	49	35	14	21 (60.0%)	11	2
	"The paper"	64.7	43.4	83	37	24	13 (35.1%)	7	3
	"Radio"	66.8	39.9	228	112	66	46 (41.1%)	35	5
	"Television"	64.2	38.6	70	26	19	7 (26.9%)	5	2
	"Internet"	62.9	45.5	123	39	31	8 (20.5%)	6	1
	Don't remember	68.1	47.7	279	139	112	27 (19.4%)	17	5
	Totals	**67.5**	**43.7**	**4157**	**1905**	**1242**	**663**	**429**	**102**

*Site-initiated promotion

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