

Online advertising resulted in more educated participants and non inferior screen fail rates when compared to offline methods in an Alzheimer's disease clinical trial

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Methodological Issue Being Addressed Can recruitment through online advertising be a viable solution for speeding up slow-to-enroll Alzheimer's Disease (AD) clinical trials without adversely affecting demographics or screen fail rates.

Introduction AD drug trials are slower to enroll and more expensive than trials in most other therapeutic areas. Historically, participants have been identified through offline methods including database searches, community outreach events, and word of mouth referrals.

Sites have increasingly turned to online advertising to speed up recruitment and reach potential participants outside of traditional offline methods.

In this study, we investigate if online recruitment methods, compared to offline recruitment methods, have an effect on the education levels of recruited participants, as well as the screen failure rate of study participants in industry-sponsored AD drug trials.

Methods In 2023, 208 participants screened at a commercial site in California for a clinical trial of an investigational anti-amyloid monoclonal antibody in participants with early symptomatic AD. Of the 208 participants, 75.5% (157) of the participants were recruited through online advertising and the remaining 24.5% (51) through offline means.

During the screening process, a number of demographic characteristics about the participant is also collected and recorded - including gender, ethnicity, and the years of formal education received by the participant. Of the 208 participants, 17 declined to answer the question about their education. For those that answered, the mean years of education was 15.28 years, with a standard deviation of 2.99 years. The median years of education was 16.

Results The average years of education for someone recruited through online advertising was 15.57 years. For a person recruited through offline channels, the average years of education was 14.35 years. Assuming unequal variances across the two populations, this difference of 1.22 years was statistically significant ($p = 0.015$).

The screening failure rate of persons recruited through online advertising was 76.4% (120 of 157). The screening failure rate of persons recruited through offline methods was 78.4% (40 of 51). Using

a 2-sample t-test for proportions, this difference of 2.0% was not statistically significant ($t = -0.29$, $p = 0.77$).

Conclusion From the analyses of the screening failure rates, it is unlikely that the recruitment method has any impact on a participant's ability to pass screening and successfully enroll into a study for an AD treatment. This is unsurprising given that the criteria for screen failures are typically clinical, which should be uncorrelated with how this person was identified for the study.

However, finding a significant effect between years of education and recruitment method is unusual. Unfortunately, there is no obvious explanation for the observed directionality. A more thorough investigation into the specific offline recruitment methods and the nuances between them would be necessary to identify the driving factors behind this effect.

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Keywords

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Alzheimer's disease
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