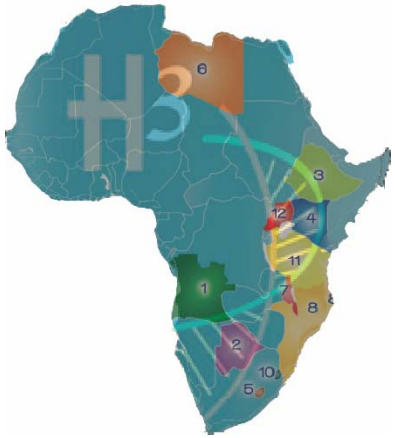

STUDY PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES

Presented at H3 Africa 5th Consortium Study Coordinators' meeting

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Introduction

Strategies for participant recruitment and retention overlap and they include the following;

- Planning and timelines
- Community engagement
- Widen recruitment catchment area
- Empower the study team
- Empower study participants
- Get to know your participants
- Quality of care

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1. Planning and time lines

- Detailed planning of study design and implementation is critical for the success of the study
- Recruitment strategies have to be clear upfront and included in the protocol
- Clear selection criteria; ensure the research assistants are well trained
- Make realistic recruitment timelines

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1. **Planning and time lines**

- Personnel effort must be adjusted accordingly
- Make realistic and achievable participant recruitment targets
- Monitor and evaluate yourself as a team regularly against the set targets

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2. **Community engagement**

- At proposal level identify where participants will be recruited from
- Consider collaborating with other institutions
- Establish a good working relationship with such institutions
- Establish or Involve already existing CAB to help in planning (recruitment, F/U and results dissemination to the community/participants)

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3. **Widen catchment area for participants**

- Consider multi-sites to take part in the large studies where recruitment is likely to be a challenge (ensure standardization of procedures and processes)
- Use recruitment tools like;

  - Radios
  - Television
  - Newspapers
  - Website
  - Public service announcement
  - Study team
- Match the recruitment tool to the target audience

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4. Empowered study team

- Recruit experienced and skilled study team
- Invest in training the team in all recommended and required research trainings like;
  - GCP
  - HSP
  - GCLP
  - SOPs
  - MOPs
  - Data tools

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Empowered study team

- Informed consent process (for genetic and genomic studies, team must be trained in the area of study)

- Do a dry run to test ALL study systems, processes and procedures and address gaps identified before starting recruitment
- Consider an internal Pre-study audit
- PI involvement in study activities

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Empowered study participants

<u>Informed consent process;</u>

- A comprehensive Patient Information Sheet (PIS)
- PIS must be put in the language that is easily understood by all potential participants
- Translation to local language is a requirement
- Participants must not be rushed through the consent process
- Explain the difference between research and routine clinical care

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Empowered study participants

- Make sure the participant is fully disclosed to the condition under study
- Obtain a written Informed Consent/Assent
- Let the participants know that they can withdraw from the study any time even after signing
- Consenting must be an ongoing process
- Check understanding

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5. **Get to know your study participants**

- Get consent to home visit participants before enrollment
- Do participant home mapping on the day of enrollment
- Obtain participants' contacts.
- Get the participant's next of kin(NoK) or secondary care taker's contact details whenever possible

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Get to know your study participants

- Put a system of tracking participants' clinic attendance on a daily basis
- Send reminder messages on their phones about their appointment at least a day before
- Contact those who miss a visit at least within 24hrs
- Do regular home visits to the participants

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Get to know your study participants

- Provide transport refund as recommended by local guidelines

- Be sensitive to your participants other needs like; connect them to other wrap around services:
  - Psychosocial issues, food, economic strengthening
  - OVC services if children eg school fees

- Give first priority to participants who stay near the research institution during recruitment

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6. Provide quality service

- Service with a smile—connect with your participant
- Avoid unnecessary delays in the clinic
- Whenever possible avoid very short appointments
- Refer for specialized care whenever required

- Regular feedback meetings between the investigators and participants

- Create a continuous communication channel with participants
- Prompt handling of participants' complaints

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References

- Personal experience working on studies in Baylor-Uganda where 100% recruitment and 0 lost to follow-up was achieved—CHAPAS 3 clinical trial

- Current Posters
  - Francis Mayige, RHDgene study ; ethical challenges in consenting process
  - D. Bukini, SCDse study; Ethical challenges in the consenting process

- National Institute of mental health hand book– "*Points to consider about recruitment and retention of clinical research participants June 2005*"

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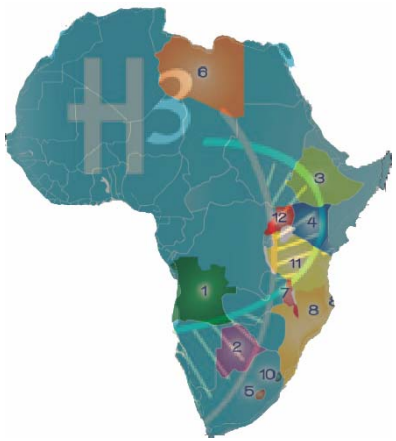

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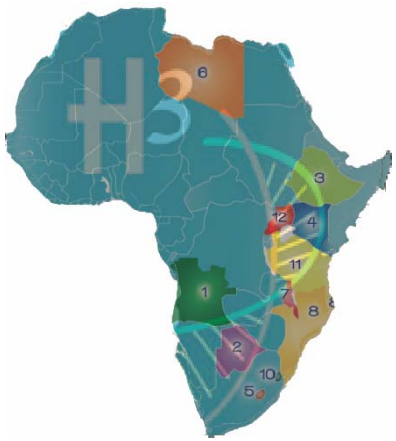

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