

••• advice for researchers

# ASK THE EXPERT

Expert answers to important research questions.

## What are the main recruiting challenges researchers need to be aware of given today's crowded health care market research landscape?

As an agency focused on the recruitment of health care professionals, we continue to witness an industry-wide trend of targeting niche audiences. With pharmaceutical companies focusing on the development of specialized medicines, this shift in the market research landscape has resulted in a steady decline in response rates, harder-to-reach segments and challenging sample goals.

It is inevitable that health care marketing research is competing for

time among a very busy group of respondents who have limited availability to participate in market research. Physicians in particular are selective when evaluating a research study invitation, oftentimes prioritizing participation by time commitment, perceived topic relevance or study importance. Compounding this, some heavily targeted physician specialties are now seeing an increasing number of invites in their in-box as research and development activities ramp up.



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## What impact do researchers have during the study design phase to help minimize the recruitment challenges?

Fortunately, there are several areas where researchers have the opportunity to mitigate the effects of the recruitment challenges stated above.

At the project outset, ensure the target list and database used for recruitment are robust enough to support the sample goals. While this sounds obvious, many ongoing studies continue to draw from legacy sample sources, thus assessing feasibility in the current landscape and adjusting accordingly should be a routine task.

Other factors of the study design important to keep in mind are to be upfront about the commitment involved in participation, including any offline or pre-study work necessary. Demonstrating the relevancy of the study topic to respondents can increase

engagement. If respondents are convinced of the importance of the study and their participation, they will be more likely to complete the exercise.

Screener design can also have implications on the willingness of respondents to participate. Overly strict screening criteria or quotas, while common in this industry, can have a negative impact both on a specific project response as well as future response. Similarly, extensive screeners can turn respondents off, especially if they do not qualify for a study. Budget a small incentive offering to terminated respondents, a goodwill gesture that may reap big rewards when you inevitably need to return to the same sample pool as criteria are relaxed. Finally, resisting the temptation to



include non-terminating questions in the screener will improve results.

Overall it is important to recognize that health care professionals are an exhaustible resource. While double-blinding protects the end-client, negative research experiences still will leave a bad taste and prohibit future participation.

Market researchers, consultants and fieldwork agencies all play a role in impacting the response rate in targeted research efforts. Understanding these challenges and the role we play is the first step. Continuous dialogue at the project level around how to mitigate this is vitally important.

Have a question you'd like to have answered? Submit it to [info@quirks.com](mailto:info@quirks.com).

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