

## For Your Insight:

### Research and Practice From the Field

**November 13, 2019**

Have a tip or resource to share? [Email us!](#)

This biweekly update highlights relevant research for RETAIN states and summarizes key takeaways that may benefit program implementation. Each summary includes a link to the article, resource, or formal abstract.

#### **Participant Recruitment for Studies on Disability and Work: Challenges and Solutions**

Lysaght et al. (2016) conducted a two-phase study to explore challenges in recruiting participants for workplace-based disability research. In Phase 1, researchers conducted a literature review to identify frequently used study design methods in workplace-based disability research and examine the success of the recruitment methods used. In Phase 2, the research team conducted qualitative interviews with employers and other stakeholders to learn about the perceived challenges in participating in workplace-based disability research, along with the types of support that employers and other stakeholders would need to overcome those challenges. Results from Phase 1 indicated that participants were most commonly recruited through disability organizations, support agencies, and existing worker databases. The authors state that, “Struggles in participant recruitment were evidenced by the use of multiple recruitment strategies, and heavy reliance on convenience sampling.” In Phase 2, qualitative interviews revealed that “time limitations, discomfort of employers with disabilities issues, and perceived lack of relevance to the workplace” were cited by employers and stakeholders as barriers to participating in this type of research. The authors conclude that several strategies could improve recruitment and participation in workplace-based disability research, “...including development of participatory research models that will enhance benefits and perceived benefits of workplace involvement.”

Abstract available: [Lysaght, R., Kranenburg, R., Armstrong, C., & Krupa, T. \(2016\). Participant recruitment for studies on disability and work: Challenges and solutions. \*Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation\*, 26\(2\), 125–140.](#)

Tags: Recruitment, worker participants, employer participants

## Strategies to Enhance Participant Recruitment and Retention in Research Involving a Community-Based Population

McCullagh et al. (2014) sought to share recruitment and retention strategies that helped them exceed recruitment goals for a study about hearing protector use among farm operators. The research team anticipated potential obstacles to recruitment and retention of the study group and planned to design the study "...to fit the unique identities and cultures as farmer groups and organizations." In addition, the study built multiple partnerships with several farm organizations. The research team found that recruitment and retention strategies were "1) based on a philosophy of mutually beneficial engagement in the research process, 2) culturally appropriate, 3) tailored to the unique needs of partnering agencies, and 4) developed and refined in a cyclical and iterative process." Farm operator retention in this 12-month study was 93%, far exceeding the research team's expectations. The research team attributes the high retention rate to their participatory research approach. However, they suggest that researchers "liberally estimate the time and other resources allowed for planning and implementing the recruitment and retention plan..." even with limited resources. One of the challenges faced by the research team was that the farm operators, as well as the farmer groups and organizations, were "largely uninformed about clinical trials...[which] necessitated some explanation to farm organization representatives, their communication department staff, and prospective study participants." The authors conclude that an approach that facilitates communication, participant–researcher relationship building, and community-based invested inputs as well as anticipating and addressing recruitment and retention challenges can lead to successful recruitment and retention of hard-to-reach populations.

Full text available: [McCullagh, M. C., Sanon, M. A., & Cohen, M. A. \(2014\). Strategies to enhance participant recruitment and retention in research involving a community-based population. \*Applied Nursing Research\*, 27\(4\), 249–253. doi:10.1016/j.apnr.2014.02.007](#)

Tags: Recruitment, retention, hard to reach populations

## Engaging Workplace Representatives in Research: What Recruitment Strategies Work Best?

While conducting a study about workplace representatives' (WRs) experiences with employees who were undergoing hip or knee replacement, Coole et al. (2018) explored different approaches for recruiting WRs to participate in the qualitative study. WRs included managers, supervisors, occupational health advisers, human resources staff, colleagues, and trade union representatives from organizations of various sizes. The research team used six strategies to recruit WRs: "(1) Approaching organizations that had participated in previous research studies; (2) contacting individuals known to members of the research team, (3) e-mailing organizations listed on open-access Chambers of Commerce databases; (4) contacting organizations via professional/business networks; (5) 'cold calling' organizations via letters, phone calls, and e-mails; and (6) via a Twitter account [that had been set up for the study]." The most successful recruitment methods were recruiting study participants via organizations that had previously participated in research and via individuals known to researchers. The authors conclude that recruitment of WRs is a time- and resource-intensive process, which is made easier by recruiting people where a relationship with the researcher already exists. However, the authors warn that this strategy leads to "...potential risk of bias and participant fatigue," which need to be appropriately managed.

Full text available: [Coole, C., Nouri, F., Narayanasamy, M., Baker, P., Khan, S., & Drummond, A. \(2018\). Engaging workplace representatives in research: What recruitment strategies work best? \*Occupational Medicine\*, 68\(4\), 282–285.](#)

Tags: employers, recruitment, work, workplace

## Public Opinions about Participating in Health Research

Teschke et al. (2010) investigated public willingness to participate in a health research survey of adults selected randomly using postal codes in the Vancouver region of British Columbia, Canada. The research team mailed questionnaires to measure participant "...willingness to participate in health research and the influence on willingness of the method of subject selection, the organization making the contact, and other factors." The team received surveys from 1,477 respondents; 85% of whom were "at least sometimes" willing to participate in health research. The researchers found that the type of organization reaching out to make contact (e.g., a university, hospital, government, or private research firm) influenced respondents' level of comfort in participating. For example, 55% of respondents felt uncomfortable being contacted by a private research firm, 26% felt uncomfortable being contacted by a government entity, 12% felt uncomfortable being contacted by a hospital, and 10% felt uncomfortable being contacted by a university. The researchers noted that in Canada, private research firms have the "least stringent oversight" of research studies because there is no requirement for peer review or human subject ethics board review. Respondents were most comfortable with the concept of being selected for a study by government data, such as a registry of voters, as opposed to via a phone book or a list of people taking certain medications or who had certain illnesses. The team found that the "factors most positively influencing choice to participate were future health benefits to society (87%) and oneself (87%), and receiving a copy of the study results (81%)." The authors conclude that overall, participating in health research was viewed favorably; however, willingness to participate may vary based on the type of organization conducting the research study.

Full text available: [Teschke, K., Marino, S., Chu, R., Tsui, J., Harris, M., & Marion, S. \(2010\). Public opinions about participating in health research. \*Canadian Journal of Public Health / Revue Canadienne De Sante Publique\*, 101\(2\), 159–164.](#)

Tags: Patient recruitment, participation in research

This document was prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Office of Disability Employment Policy and Retaining Employment and Talent After Injury/Illness Network (RETAIN) state grantees, by the American Institutes for Research under DOL Contract Number 1605DC-18-F-00429. The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to DOL, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement of same by the U.S. Government.