Clinical Trial Recruitment with Social Media—What to Expect?

Bressler, Brian1; Gunn, Hal2; Jang, Julie2; Vandermeirsch, Gillian2; Lim, Xn Y.2; Sutcliffe, Simon2; Chen, Jenny M.2; Gluck, Rashieda2; Pankovich, Jim2

1Gastrointestinal Research Institute, Vancouver, BC, Canada, 2Qu Biologics Inc., Vancouver, BC, Canada

Background

Recruitment into clinical trials evaluating IBD therapies is becoming more challenging as new marketed and investigational treatments have emerged. New strategies to inform and engage with potential study participants are necessary to continue the development of novel treatments. In June 2013, Qu Biologics began recruitment for a 68-participant, Phase III randomized, placebo-controlled study evaluating the investigational treatment, QBECO SSI, for the treatment of moderate-to-severe Crohn’s disease. A social media awareness campaign was incorporated into the study recruitment plan. Presented here is the experience utilizing social media to educate and engage patients leading to participation in this study.

Methods

The trial was open to international participants with moderate-to-severe Crohn’s disease (CDAI score of >220 and an elevated biomarker of inflammation). Qu Biologics implemented a multi-channel awareness campaign utilizing a dedicated clinical trial website (www.qucrohnstrial.com) and social media accounts in Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram. Through social media channels, Qu Biologics provided information about the trial and referred followers to a dedicated clinical trial website. The website had a pre-screening questionnaire to preliminarily evaluate whether patients met the basic inclusion/exclusion criteria. Questionnaire results were sent in real-time from the secured website to the clinical trial site for follow up.

Enrollment of 68 participants was completed in November 2015. During the recruitment period:

- 1,178 individuals completed the online pre-screening questionnaire (459 from Canada, 588 USA, and 131 outside North America)
- 597 individuals (51%) passed the online pre-screening questionnaire
- 54 individuals (9%) of those who passed pre-screening were randomized into the study, representing 79% of the 68 randomized participants
- All individuals who completed the online pre-screening questionnaire were contacted by the clinical trial site. The most common reasons that individuals did not enter the study were (1) inability to take the time off work required to travel to the clinical trial site, (2) too ill to travel to the trial site, and (3) disease not sufficiently active to meet the trial inclusion criteria.

Results

Enrollment of 68 participants was completed in November 2015. During the recruitment period:

- 1,178 individuals completed the online pre-screening questionnaire (459 from Canada, 588 USA, and 131 outside North America)
- 597 individuals (51%) passed the online pre-screening questionnaire
- 54 individuals (9%) of those who passed pre-screening were randomized into the study, representing 79% of the 68 randomized participants

All individuals who completed the online pre-screening questionnaire were contacted by the clinical trial site. The most common reasons that individuals did not enter the study were (1) inability to take the time off work required to travel to the clinical trial site, (2) too ill to travel to the trial site, and (3) disease not sufficiently active to meet the trial inclusion criteria.

Conclusions

Patients are seeking greater information about their condition, treatment options, and clinical trials available to them. The use of social media to disseminate information about this clinical trial in patients with moderate-to-severe Crohn’s disease was a cost-effective method to increase awareness leading to enhanced enrollment in the study.

www.qubiologics.com
www.quibd.com