

Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) in Research – Case Study

Provided by:

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How patients and the public were involved

Oxford Vaccine Group has a long-standing commitment to working with the public. This has been formalised since 2009, when PPI volunteers were recruited as part of an H1N1 (“swine flu”) vaccine study. A new PPI group was formed in 2013 with the aim of providing a structured input into new studies and funding bids. Since then seven participants have been recruited, whose varied backgrounds are invaluable in terms of the expertise they are able to offer. It includes parents of young children, participants in vaccine studies, a retired Oxford Vaccine Group staff member and a Biomedical Scientist.

The PPI group has focussed particularly on reviewing participant materials for upcoming studies prior to their submission to Ethics Committees, and has provided ideas for improving the layout, language and content of specific study materials. The group is also helping us to consider how recruitment approaches can generally be improved in order to appeal to a broader section of the community. Two PPI participants have agreed to be collaborators on new funding applications, which will require their ongoing involvement if the bids are successful. PPI group members are also prepared to make other contributions between meetings (e.g. reviewing the Vaccine Knowledge website content) and have been involved in reviewing lay summaries for funding bids.

The impact of involving patients and public in the study

Overall, feedback from the PPI group has been detailed and constructive, and it has clearly demonstrated the benefits of seeking the views of laypeople who are not specialists in vaccine research. Suggestions made by the PPI group have been welcomed by Ethics Committees and by study sponsors (as well as by the researchers themselves), and used to amend subsequent versions of documents. Changes to recruitment materials are being implemented, and their effect on recruitment will be monitored. In future the PPI group will continue to be used in the way described above, and the group’s remit may be expanded to have more input into study design and development as well as into study materials.

The importance of involving patients and the public in research

All our studies depend on being able to recruit successfully from the general population, and the PPI group has an important role to play in terms of getting our publicity and documentation right, as well as commenting on the design of new studies and whether they will work from a participant’s point of view.

The biggest challenges in PPI and what might help to overcome them

The biggest challenge has been recruiting a good cross-section of people to the group (although we feel that to have engaged seven enthusiastic participants is a very positive result). The new Patients Active in Research – Thames Valley website may help in this respect.