Improving Enrollment in Cancer Clinical Trials

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Key Points . . .

➤ Cancer clinical trial participation, from research nurses’ perspective, is influenced by how they are involved in the enrollment process and by physicians’ and patients’ attitudes toward and familiarity with clinical research.
➤ Research nurses are in a unique position to understand, address, and influence the attitudes of physicians and patients toward research.
➤ Research nurses offer a broad set of tactics that can be applied to clinical trial recruitment policies to increase enrollment.

Nonphysician support staff members increasingly are recognized as having a pivotal role in successful recruitment (Ehrenberger & Aiken, 2003; Tattersall, 2002; Wright, Crooks, Ellis, Mings, & Whelan, 2002). Clinical research associates, research nurses, research coordinators, data managers, and administrators all are involved in some way with enrolling and following patients throughout the clinical trial process. All have a unique perspective (Barrett, 2002; Grunfeld, Zitzelsberger, Coristine, & Aspelund, 2002; Loh, Butow, Brown, & Boyle, 2002) and generally are seen as being able to relate complete, objective, and unhurried information to patients (Wright et al.). This pilot project identified successful recruitment strategies for the general population and the underserved from the perspective of the research nurse.

Methods

Following approval of the study protocol by the institutional review board of Rutgers University in New Jersey, data were collected using three vehicles: a focus group, survey

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Digital Object Identifier: 10.1188/04.ONF.610-614