

# Patient Engagement: What Matters Most

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April's Sites NOW meeting with Ken Getz of [CISCRP](#) and [Tufts Center for the Study of Drug Development](#) and Casey Orvin of [StudyKIK](#) explored what successful patient engagement looks like, and how we can strengthen it throughout the pre-study, post-study, and touchpoints in between. Now more than ever, successful patient engagement practices include convenience, connection, trustworthiness, and truthfulness.

From the April Sites NOW discussion, it was clear there is a prominent opportunity to develop a content marketing strategy that can be shared from site to site to help them get started building awareness and engaging with their local and target communities through social media, video discussions, text messaging and more. It was clear that activating a “one size fits all” approach to recruitment and patient engagement will not be successful if we want to reach and establish trust within diverse patient communities. Multiple forums for disseminating messages are needed as well as empathetic, personalized and strategic messaging to develop meaningful and beneficial relationships with patients. By finding ways to foster relationships within communities, we can better understand the patient profile and create an experience to keep them informed and engaged about clinical research.

A compelling challenge the industry is working to address is increasing awareness and literacy surrounding clinical research as a whole. A 2017 [CISCRP Perceptions & Insights Study](#) showed that a majority of the general public doesn't know where clinical research is conducted, can't name an agency that oversees safety, are not aware of how much time it takes to develop a new medical therapy, and can't name a living scientist in clinical research. During the pandemic, the number of people who perceived clinical trials as unsafe and who were unwilling to participate in a study increased substantially. When patients have a better understanding of what clinical trials are, how they work, and their impact on society, the industry can establish and maintain trust with the public that will shift towards easier recruitment and engagement.

Social media use has soared during the pandemic, and our industry has a unique opportunity to connect with patients like never before. Within online communities, communication should be focused on more than posting and discussing trials. Sharing entertaining content that is relatable to patients is a simple way to keep patient communities interactive in meaningful ways. Engaging with these communities will also allow us to offer greater transparency and disclosure about clinical research processes. To strengthen patient engagement post-study, it's critical to convey appreciation and value and establish ongoing connection and support. Post-trial, CROs can share results of studies so study participants can better understand the value

of their participation. Then, patients may be will be more willing to share their trial experience with others.

Continuing to minimize the complexity of patient experiences and creating convenient procedures and protocols is another top priority to facilitate better patient engagement. Patient Advisory Boards and Professional Advisory Panels are some of the top patient-centric activities currently being implemented and piloted among clinical research organizations. Utilizing emerging strategies and technologies that were deployed in recent years or due to the pandemic can continue to help increase patient engagement in trials as well, including telemedicine, remote monitoring, eConsent, home visits, wearable devices, direct-to-patient drug delivery, and other modalities. By increasing convenience of participating in trials, we can increase willingness to participate and keep patients engaged throughout the trial and beyond.

April's Sites NOW meeting also discussed the importance of engaging with healthcare providers and keeping them informed of study opportunities so that patients will be much more likely to participate in a trial. According to a 2019 survey by CISRP, 83% of patients consider their physician's recommendation a top factor influencing their decision to participate. Additionally, 68% of patients rate their HCP as the top preferred source for information about clinical research and 71% of patients say that they would speak with their physician or nurse prior to deciding to participate.

Building a relationship of trust through consistent and predictable interaction over time (BRT) should be the focus for stronger patient engagement strategies. It's imperative for sites to be committed, dedicated, and engaged with patients and HCPs. Once we have established trust, we can facilitate discussions, garner feedback, and hear insights and concerns directly from patients.

Join the next SCRS Sites NOW meeting, convening every month. For details, visit <https://myscrs.org/scrs-sites-now/>.

**SCRS Sites NOW** is a virtual discussion and content project created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and focused on the changing landscape clinical research sites and industry partners now face. Each session is centered around a singular topic; in January, the topic was the Evolution of Patient Engagement. Attendees benefit from an opening presentation hosted by an industry leader who provides a unique perspective and meaningful metrics on the topic at hand, then break out into groups for a dynamic discussion guided by relevant queries designed to identify areas of opportunity for participants in the clinical research pipeline.

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