

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN CLINICAL TRIALS

**RADIO AND
OTHER
MEDIA**

FEBRUARY, 2025



INTRODUCTION

Clinical trials are a critical step to advancing scientific research, medicines and patient care. There has been growing recognition of the importance of equity, diversity and inclusion (ED&I) in clinical research. Yet, according to a study on the participation of ethnic minority groups, only 5% of respondents in these communities in the UK have participated in a clinical trial.¹ Low representation of diverse communities can be attributed to several factors – cultural and communication barriers, mistrust in the healthcare system, low awareness, lack of accessibility, as well as poor targeting and outreach from traditional clinical trial recruitment methods.²

In May 2024, IQVIA's Health Equity Summit included a session with leaders in the life sciences, healthcare system and three patients who shared their trial experiences. They highlighted radio as a key recruitment tool. In August 2024, a follow-up roundtable included these patients, along with regulators, researchers, and NHS and industry leaders. They explored the role of radio and other media in

reaching under-served communities for trials. This roundtable was hosted and led by Angela McFarlane, VP, Strategic Planning UK & North Europe, IQVIA, and Dr Suki Balendra, Director of Strategic Partnerships, Paddington Life Sciences.



This report aims to share key findings from the roundtable, along with supporting evidence, case studies, and next-step recommendations. The authors hope to inform researchers and health system stakeholders about using radio and other media to enhance equity, diversity, and inclusion (ED&I) in clinical research. They also aim to inspire innovative approaches to recruiting participants for clinical trials.

¹ Mantell Associates. Should diversity be mandatory in U.K Clinical Trials? Available at: <https://www.mantellassociates.com/should-diversity-be-mandatory-in-u-k-clinical-trials/>

² Innovative Trials. Ending the 'diversity gap' in research: Shadow Science Minister joins pharma experts and BAME leaders to take action. Available at: <https://innovativetrials.com/press-release-ending-the-diversity-gap-in-research/>

WHY ED&I IN CLINICAL RESEARCH MATTERS

Including diversity in clinical research is crucial. It leads to stronger data and better understanding of treatment responses across different groups. This, in turn, allows for more personalised healthcare and wider access to new medicines. It helps doctors, the industry, and healthcare systems improve care.³ Furthermore, diverse trials create jobs and support the life sciences sector, boosting the UK economy.⁴

The UK is an attractive location for conducting clinical trials. Alongside a fertile and flexible regulatory environment,⁵ the country's focus on innovative trial designs and its strong scientific community makes it a competitive destination for global clinical research, leading to significant public and private investments.⁶

Despite a diverse population, clinical trials in this country often fail to represent diverse communities.¹ The UK regions with the highest disease burden have the fewest clinical trial participants.⁷ This means research often involves healthier individuals. They may respond differently to therapies and have different experiences with healthcare services than those more affected by health inequalities.⁷

³ Kelsey, M.D. *et al.* (2022) *Inclusion and diversity in clinical trials: Actionable steps to drive lasting change, Contemporary clinical trials*. Available at: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9133187/>

⁴ ABPI. An opportunity for growth: Clinical research in the UK. Available at: <https://www.abpi.org.uk/r-d-manufacturing/clinical-research/an-opportunity-for-growth-clinical-research-in-the-uk/>

⁵ Gov.UK. What we're doing to speed up clinical trials in the UK. Available at: <https://healthmedia.blog.gov.uk/2023/11/22/what-were-doing-to-speed-up-clinical-trials-in-the-uk/>

⁶ Gov.UK. UK secures £400 million investment to boost clinical trials. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-secures-400-million-investment-to-boost-clinical-trials>

⁷ NHS. Increasing Diversity in Research Participation: A good practice guide for engaging with underrepresented groups. Available at: [B1905-increasing-diversity-in-research-participation.pdf - Google Drive](#)

“The critical question is how do we reach people who have not participated in research? [This includes] those who are generally disengaged with the health system, their own health, and are resistant to engage with healthcare professionals. Unfortunately, these are the communities where we see the highest health inequalities, and where the people would benefit the most from clinical research.”

- Roundtable participant

RADIO AS A CHANNEL FOR DIVERSE RECRUITMENT



Despite the surge in online and streaming platforms, radio remains one of the most popular and trusted media channels in the UK.

According to RAJAR, 49.9 million people in the UK listen to the radio every week, representing 88.6% of the adult population.⁸



A study found that 61% of respondents in the UK expressed trust in radio as a media channel.⁹



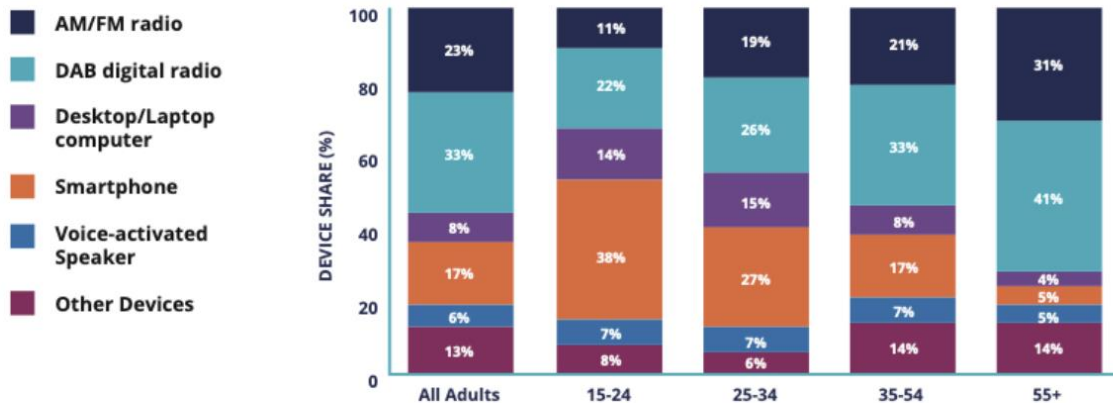
The proliferation of online platforms has meant that there are several ways to tune in to the radio. According to a study conducted in 2022, the largest age group listening to live radio are those 55 years and older, whereas the younger generation (16-24) are more likely to use digital radio, computers, smartphones, speakers and other devices to listen to their radio programme (See Figure 1).¹⁰

⁸ Radio Centre. UK radio audience hits record-breaking high. Available at: <https://www.radiocentre.org/uk-radio-audience-hits-record-breaking-high/#:~:text=The%20new%20figures%20for%20the,million%20set%20in%20Q1%202022>

⁹ Radio Centre. Radio continues to be the most trusted medium in Europe. Available at: <https://www.radiocentre.org/radio-continues-to-be-the-most-trusted-medium-in-europe/#:~:text=The%20survey%20found%20that%20radio,joining%20the%20ranks%20this%20time>.

¹⁰ Gov.UK. Digital radio and audio review. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-radio-and-audio-review/digital-radio-and-audio-review#chapter-2----listeners-and-ensuring-the-appeal-of-radio-and-audio>

AUDIO (EXCLUDING VISUAL) BY DEVICE SHARE % FOR DEMOGRAPHICS (15-24, 25-34, 35-54 AND 55+)



'Other' devices includes Tablets, CD Players, Portable music players, Record players, TVs etc RAJAR MIDAS, Spring 2020

Figure 1: Breakdown of age group and consumption of radio across different devices. Source: Gov.UK. Digital radio and audio review. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-radio-and-audio-review/digital-radio-and-audio-review#chapter-2--listeners-and-ensuring-the-appeal-of-radio-and-audio>

THE OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE ED&I IN CLINICAL TRIALS

In a study by the University of Northampton, 71% of local community radio listeners across 20 radio stations, said their health had improved as a direct result of hearing about health services on their local community radio.¹¹

There are national, regional, local and community radio stations where researchers can share information about their clinical trials through advertisements, features and interviews. While national radio stations will be more focused on large scale trial result announcements, regional, local and community stations offer opportunities for researchers to reach their target populations through a trusted medium.

At the roundtable, attendees discussed the benefits of radio for recruitment, key themes included, a targeted audience, potential for trust-building and opportunities for translation, which are essential criteria for recruiting diverse populations. Key discussion points are set out below.

¹¹ University of Northampton. Local community radio and its 'overwhelmingly' positive impact on society. Available at: <https://www.northampton.ac.uk/news/local-community-radio-and-its-overwhelmingly-positive-impact-on-society/>

Alan heard about a blood pressure trial on LBC Radio. He was not familiar with clinical trials and initially disregarded it. But he heard it repeated a few times and acted on it. Alan shared that listening to radio at night is comforting with the familiarity of the reputable presenters. Since taking part in the trial, he has become very interested in medical research.

- Patient story shared at the roundtable



1. ENABLING A TARGETED APPROACH

Regional, local, and community radio stations help researchers reach specific populations, whether by geography or community. Community stations serve various ethnic groups, ages, and interests.¹²

EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS

- **Ambur Radio** – A multicultural community radio station in Walsall, Midlands, which broadcasts Asian music, and is available in many languages, including Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu and Gujarati.
- **EAVA FM** – A multicultural community radio station in Leicester, which has a regular health show inviting researchers to talk about their projects.
- **ShoutOut** – LGBTQ+ community radio station in Brighton.
- **Trans Radio UK** – A radio station for the Transgender community made by the Transgender community.

2. HARNESSING THE POWER OF THE SPOKEN WORD AND STORYTELLING

The spoken word is key for sharing important messages and calls to action. It also enhances storytelling with more emotion and impact. Researchers can use creative methods like poetry or spoken word to discuss their studies. They can highlight the importance of representation in clinical research. Additionally, radio features and interviews foster dynamic conversations about personal stories and researchers' messages. Examples of spoken word content for research recruitment can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

¹² Ofcom. Community radio. Available at: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/community-radio/community-radio/>

3. BUILDING TRUST

Listening to someone with lived experience can build trust and prompt action. Using radio, especially trusted presenters, boosts the credibility of recruitment efforts in the community. It also opens doors to work with reliable advocates like patients, trial participants, and healthcare professionals. One roundtable participant highlighted the advantages of partnering with a trusted entity over paying for ads on commercial radio. They cited BBC Radio 2's Medical Mondays as an example.

Moreover, people often tune into radio shows at the same time, whether during commutes, school runs, or before bed. This creates a chance to repeat messages. Such repetition helps the audience become familiar with the request, understand it, and then act. This can be achieved through repeated ads or multiple segments on regular shows.

PATIENT STORY

Guy heard about a trial in the Sunday paper. On taking part, he valued the welcoming atmosphere at the Research Centre and the support offered by the clinical staff.

4. OVERCOMING LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL BARRIERS

A significant barrier to diverse clinical trial participation is language differences. Through spoken word on the radio, you can translate messages for the community you want to reach. A recruitment script can be translated into multiple languages, and used in various channels or shows. This approach helps reach communities where English isn't the first language. Involving community members to translate or share the message boosts respect and trust.

5. GENERATING RICH DATA AND METRICS

Measuring the recruitment message's impact on the target group is crucial. It lets research teams adapt the approach as needed. With live radio, this is tricky. Stations can share listener numbers and locations. However, they can't tell who actually heard, and acted on, the message. To solve this, teams should monitor response rates closely. They should check for peaks during radio features. Also, they should always ask where people heard about the trial.

SUMMARY

Radio helps researchers target, translate, and build trust, three key factors for reaching underserved groups. The UK research community can fully leverage radio to connect with these communities. By collaborating with radio stations, we can share research opportunities and raise awareness about the need for diversity.

OTHER MEDIA CHANNELS

PATIENT STORY

Raymond's main draw for in taking part in a trial was to improve his health and find answers to his condition. The research centre was in a convenient location, but he would have been happy to travel further. He first heard about the trial after a chance encounter from walking past the research centre. He felt that he received a very welcoming response at the centre. Ray also saw the NHS logo associated with the centre, which gave him additional trust in the research.

Roundtable participants also discussed other forms of media that can be used to recruit underserved populations for clinical research.

1. SOCIAL MEDIA

At the roundtable, participants agreed that social media is key for ongoing storytelling. It allows sharing ads and content across channels over time. This approach can reach more people, especially with the rise in remote work. However, posts by researchers alone on traditional platforms often miss their target audience.

With the right strategies, social media can effectively target audiences, offer translations, and build trust. Researchers need to find where their audience is online. They should create engaging, long-term campaigns and partner with trusted advocates to boost trial participation.

One attendee pointed out that campaigns work better for those already health-conscious. So, only the health-aware might be drawn to these campaigns. To reach those less engaged, combining social media with in-person events is vital. This approach helps build trust and increases engagement.

2. PAID SEARCH

Paid search and advertising can effectively target audiences with a call to action. However, they face challenges like algorithm changes, policy updates, and regulations. The clinical research sector is highly regulated. It requires ethics committee approval, limiting what can be said and done in paid advertising.

3. PODCASTS

Recent research found that over two-thirds of people aged 18 and over in the UK get their information from podcasts. Interestingly, nearly half (48%) of Black adults, and two in five (39%) Asian adults in the UK listen to podcasts each month.¹³

Researchers can run paid advertisements on podcasts or join a podcast as a guest speaker. Both will involve more investment of time and money. However, if there's an audience interested in a related topic, a podcast interview is valuable. It allows a detailed discussion on a study and the importance of diverse recruitment.

¹³ Edison Research. The UK Podcast Consumer 2024 by Edison Research. Available at: <https://www.edisonresearch.com/the-uk-podcast-consumer-2024-by-edison-research/#:~:text=More%20UK%20adults%20than%20ever,listen%20to%20podcasts%20each%20month.>

NEXT STEPS

The attendees at the roundtable plan to reconvene at the 2025 IQVIA annual NHS & Life Sciences Health Equity Summit. By this time, attendees hope to see:

- Practical examples from researchers who have developed and delivered recruitment campaigns over radio
- Patient stories at the heart of these campaigns and trusted advocates being used as messengers
- Shareable learnings on what has worked and what has not, to develop and expand our approach in 2025 and beyond
- Insights to share back with the National Institute of Healthcare Research (NIHR) and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), so that we can call for funding, investment and regulations that enable more innovative recruitment approaches

CONCLUSION

The authors of this report hope that researchers will use this as an informative guidance on how to use radio as a recruitment method for their research moving forward. We hope it serves as inspiration for more innovative recruitment methods to reach diverse populations. The authors also hope sponsors and regulators will support this ethos, and provide the time and investment needed to ensure the research we deliver, benefits those who need it most.

CONTACT US

We will be collecting case studies over the next year. If you have any research projects and trials that use innovative recruitment methods, please share them with:

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CASE STUDIES

Case Study: Campaign to increase the diversity of people taking part in research through the NIHR BioResource' **Equality, NIHR BioResource and South Asian Health Action**

This project aims to boost the number of people taking part in research through the NIHR BioResource, from Black, African, Caribbean, and South Asian communities.

Equality, a community engagement agency, teamed up with eight organisations for this recruitment campaign. Notably, Equality collaborated with South Asian Health Action (SAHA) to spread the message via radio. Kirit, SAHA's Chair, hosted a weekly health show on EAVA FM. He invited a researcher from NIHR BioResource for a live chat about the campaign. Additionally, Equality and SAHA created a scripted advert that aired on EAVA FM for six weeks. The community responded positively to both the interview and the advert. Although we couldn't measure direct effects, the campaign led to over 1000 visits to the NIHR BioResource website.

Case Study: TRUST. Overcoming Mistrust in Health Research **TRUST. Overcoming Mistrust in Health Research** **NIHR Clinical Research Network North West London**

This film, directed by Dr Keerti Gedela and co-produced with Spirited Pictures, is a brief public engagement documentary for the NIHR North London Regional Research Delivery Network. It unites community research champions, patients, NHS Trusts, and research teams across North London. Their goal? To make research more inclusive and improve communication with the public.

The film explores the delicate bond between trust and healthcare. It combines public health messages with insights from community members and NHS researchers. Shot in various London locations, including the Tavares Strachan exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, it features over 30 contributors.

These include community voices, health experts, and NHS research teams, all working on projects aimed at underserved groups. They tackle issues in maternal health, sickle cell disease, youth mental health, and complex health needs. Dr Chris van Tulleken from UCL also contributes to this important discussion.

The film highlights past injustices and barriers in clinical research. It shows how inclusive research can heal and unite, tackling urgent health issues. It calls for rebuilding trust in health research to create a healthier, fairer future.

Dissemination plans: The film kicked off with a panel discussion on November 6th. Now, it will be shared widely through stakeholder screenings (community and health groups), NHS Trust networks, social media platforms, and research engagement events, aiming to inspire more action around rebuilding trust in health research.

Case Study: A Phase 3 Randomised, Placebo-Controlled Clinical Study for Reducing Major Adverse Cardiovascular Events in Participants at High Cardiovascular Risk

[Absolutely Health](#), **NHS Research Trust**

This Phase 3 study targeted adults with high cholesterol and cardiovascular risk. It aimed for diversity, focusing on underrepresented groups, especially non-white males. A group that is disproportionately affected by the condition, and often under-represented in research.

Absolutely Health crafted a detailed recruitment strategy. This included creative content, a website, an online pre-screening database, and ads with inclusive imagery. The goal was to build trust and encourage participation from overlooked communities. The team used a data-driven approach for recruitment. This involved profiling, geographic targeting, and segmenting by interests. The strategy ensured broad reach while tailoring messages for different ethnic groups. Ads were designed to be culturally sensitive and accessible.

In just four weeks, the campaign reached 220,000 people and gained 1,500 registrations. It surpassed goals, enrolling patients from diverse backgrounds. This success showed the effectiveness of diversity-focused strategies in improving health research and outcomes.

Case Study: Study in mild-moderate hypertension with a novel RNAi drug + 3 phase III studies in high-risk cardiovascular patients not at target with standard lipid lowering therapies

Dr Manish Saxena, Clinical Co-Director, William Harvey Clinical Research Centre and Deputy Director Research, Barts Health NHS Trust and QMUL

The team have run large-scale social media campaigns that successfully promoted diversity and inclusion among participants. These campaigns highlighted the

benefits of social media and digital media in promoting research and engaging with patients beyond the trial site catchment areas.

Another large-scale social media campaign is planned for 2025, as part of a major, single-centre, NIHR-funded device study on hypertension. The aim is to achieve good diversity, developing this therapy across all ranges of BP, gender, age, and ethnicity.

Case Study: heart failure patients and patients with raised triglycerides TGs + CVRM risk factors

IQVIA & Dr Manish Saxena, Clinical Co-Director, William Harvey Clinical Research Centre and Deputy Director Research, Barts Health NHS Trust and QMUL

The team accessed hard-to-reach heart failure patients and those with elevated triglycerides (TGs) through GP databases, with the help of pharmacists. Pharmacist-patient interaction fosters diversity and inclusion, as it helps patients feel at ease and receptive to research.

Collaborating with pharmacists to boost diversity and inclusion in research is a largely unexplored area, but one that holds significant potential for UK research. The team is planning further community engagement initiatives and events with ICBs, focusing on CVRM risk factors, health promotion, and disease prevention, as well as research opportunities, in collaboration with pharmaceutical and academic partners.

PRACTICAL RESOURCES FOR RESEARCHERS

Author	Title
Ofcom	List of Community Radio Stations
University of Bath	A Guide to Community Radio and Public Engagement with Research
Radio Co.	Community Radio Explained
NIHR CRN NLW	Framework for Embedding ED&I Processes within clinical trials and health and social care research
Trial Forge	Improving Trial Diversity, Guidance and Frameworks
NIHR	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit
NHS England	Increasing diversity in research participation: A good practice guide for engaging with underrepresented groups
Newcastle University	ED&I Toolkit for Researchers

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- Alan Church, Research participant
- Dr Keerti Gedela, EDI Lead for NIHR NWL Clinical Research Network
- Jessica Greenman, Communications & Patient Affairs Manager, Ipsen
- Dr Sarah Jarvis MBE, Clinical Director, Patient.Info
- Guy Liebenberg, Research participant
- Prof Andrea Manfrin, Deputy Director of Clinical Investigations and Trials, MHRA
- Lisa Sands, CEO, Absolutely Advertising
- Raymond Saliu, Research participant
- Dr Manish Saxena, Deputy Director Research, Barts Health NHS Trust and QMUL
- Sonia Simons, Agency Account Director, Absolutely Advertising