

Optimising Ambulance Service Contribution to Clinical Trials

Background

Out-of-hospital cardiac arrest trials can prove challenging and there is a need to share learning from those that have recruited successfully. We have just completed 3 years of recruitment to PARAMEDIC2, a placebo-controlled trial of adrenaline in out-of-hospital cardiac arrest. This study was designed to describe the experience of paramedics recruiting patients in cardiac arrest to a medicines trial.

Methods

Four focus groups were conducted across different geographical regions of SCAS. Forty-four participants contributed to the focus groups. Data was audio recorded, transcribed and analysed for emerging themes.

Results

Four overarching themes were identified: Context for the research, Ethical concerns, Concerns at the patient's side and Ongoing support. Participants felt that research such as PARAMEDIC2 is important and necessary to drive medical progress. They valued the opportunity to be part of such a large project. Due to the deferred consent model employed, participants felt it important that there was public awareness of the trial. Most had equipoise regarding adrenaline, but some felt concerned about enrolling younger patients. There was discussion around what constitutes a successful outcome following resuscitation. Struggles with ethical concerns were overcome through training and one-to-one discussion with research paramedics. Participants valued feedback on their performance of trial tasks but also wanted feedback on their resuscitation skills. Cardiac arrest places a high cognitive demand on paramedics; simplicity and reinforcement of trial processes were key to facilitating recruitment. Caring for relatives was a high priority for paramedics and some felt conflicted about not discussing the trial with them.

Conclusions

This study has provided insights into the experience of being involved in a large-scale prehospital trial. Investment in time and resource to provide face to face training and personalized feedback to paramedics can foster engagement and optimise performance.

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Researchers

Helen Pocock, Michelle Thomson, Sarah Taylor, Charles D Deakin, Ed England

South Central Ambulance NHS Foundation Trust