Ten Commandments of Faith-Based Recruiting

Introduction:
Mistrust, cultural insensitivity, access difficulties, and limited benefits to participants have historically hindered minority and older persons' recruitment into research studies. Churches, especially those serving ethnic minorities, are uniquely positioned to facilitate participation in health promotion research because they are widely accessible for these unique population groups. This study describes effective faith-based recruitment methods for older, Black and White women's participation in a health promotion intervention study.

Method(s):
An extensive literature review was performed to elicit best practices in the recruitment of older and minority women. Logs were used to record the recruitment process during a nurse-directed intervention study which sampled equal numbers of older, African American and White women (N=96).

Results:
Although recruitment was challenging, we recruited an adequate, racially-mixed sample during a short time-period. The 10 principal recommendations include: I. Minimize distrust by involving the Pastor in advocating/collaborating with investigators; II. Select key insiders (church-mothers) for customization and facilitation of most aspects of the study; III. Use cultural and age-sensitive materials; IV. Use incentives; V. Provide personal benefits to participation; VI. Provide access to study site, customize scheduling, and use safe and familiar environments; VII. Make it a social event by serving refreshments and including fun; VIII. Increase investigator â€œface timeâ€ by participating in other church activities; IX. Utilize existing church groups to encourage peer-support and empowerment; X. Customize spirituality (lead by eldest) for all contacts.

Discussion:
Research study designs of community based projects should consider addressing reported needs of the community from which it plans to sample. Early planning and developing partnerships with pastors and key members of the church are essential to successful faith-based recruiting. Trusting relationships, open and culturally sensitive communications, and comfortable, fun environments are important considerations when planning health interventions for faith communities.

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