CVS to Help Engage Minority Populations in Clinical Trials

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Your local CVS pharmacy might become an entryway for you to participate in clinical trials, thanks to a new partnership between CVS Health and Medable, a virtual clinical trial platform aimed at improving access to and retention in studies.

Less than 4% of Americans participate in clinical trials, according to a CVS Health press release on the collaboration. What's worse, minorities and vulnerable populations, including Black Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans, are underrepresented in clinical trials.

"Over 40% of the vulnerable population in the U.S. lives within five miles of a CVS Pharmacy location, so we have a chance to engage them," said Tony Clapsis, general manager and senior vice president of CVS Health Clinical Trial Services, in the press release, adding that the collaboration "will further enrich and accelerate our ability to make a difference in the lives of patients and support an improved clinical research process."

The collaboration focuses on Phase III and IV clinical trials.

"Our mission is to bring effective therapies to all patients, regardless of where they live, their social status or race," added Sans Thakur, chief growth officer at Medable. "This collaboration intends to bridge research and science into communities with local access and experience that builds greater trust in health and medicine. [The collaboration] gives us an opportunity to harness this time of change and respond differently to unmet needs in local communities."

At certain MinuteClinic locations, CVS Health will use Medable's software to engage and retain people in clinical trials while collecting the needed data. By allowing people to participate in trials without having to travel far to attend a specific clinic, Medable's technology expands the research to include more patients. This will also boost health equity and diminish health dispartities found among minority populations.

This isn't CVS's first foray into clinical trial recruitment. As FierceBiotech reports, CVS helped enroll 300,000 people in COVID-19 trials. In May 2021, CVS launched a new business called Clinical Trial

Services.

At the time, CVS noted that 80% of clinical trials fail to meet their participant enrollment deadlines and that an average of 30% of participants drop out before a study is finished.

“Traditionally low patient enrollment, diversity and engagement coupled with inconvenient trial sites, challenging study participation requirements, including the length of participation, show the need to improve the current model—particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Troyen A. Brennan, MD, MPH, executive vice president and chief medical officer of CVS Health, when Clinical Trial Services launched. “Combining clinical trial expertise from across the CVS Health enterprise with our growing connection to the communities we serve, will help create a new clinical trial experience that works better for participants, health care providers, clinical research organizations and study sponsors.”

In related news, see “Minorities Are Underrepresented in COVID-19 Clinical Trials,” “Clinical Trials for HIV Meds Under-Recruit Women and People of Color” and “New Study Highlights Lack of Diversity and Inclusion in Vaccine Clinical Trails.”

Finally, to better understand clinical trials and what they hope to accomplish, read “What’s an Endpoint?” The article summarizes a recent discussion between researchers as part of a podcast from AVAC: Global Advocacy for HIV Prevention.

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