

10 Tips For Researchers Conducting Studies In Dialysis Settings

Tips developed with input from over 150 dialysis stakeholders including patients, care partners, clinic personnel, medical providers, and corporate dialysis representatives.

Understand the dialysis environment

- Seek clinic-level input.** On-the-ground stakeholders can often provide valuable insight regarding clinic-level workflows, dynamics, and research capacity. Prior to finalizing your research plans, review your draft protocol with clinic personnel and patients to assess their interest and perspectives on feasibility.
- Seek corporate-level input.** Corporate dialysis organizations may be able to help researchers develop more feasible implementation plans. Engage them early in study design development. Once you have a final protocol, know that approvals may take a while—plan for potential delays.

Build trust and gain buy-in

- Introduce yourself.** Clinic personnel and patients want to feel connected to research involving their clinics. Introduce the research team at study start. No matter the format (in-person, webinars, or pre-recorded videos), tell clinic stakeholders who you are and why you care about your research.
- Bridge the trust gap.** Trust is key to successful patient recruitment and clinic personnel engagement in research. Try using a “warm hand-off” approach where trusted individuals, like clinic personnel, introduce research team members to potential study participants.

Provide ongoing research education and training

- Provide research education.** Clinic personnel and patients have varying levels of research knowledge. Consider providing general research education prior to study start. Recommended materials: go.unc.edu/DialysisResearchEducationToolkit
- Plan for personnel training and re-training.** Clinic personnel research training and re-training are essential for successful study implementation. Such trainings require time and money, but are well worth the investment.
- Expect personnel turnover.** Clinic personnel turnover is inevitable. Allocate additional time and money to train new staff.

Communicate and follow-up

- Set expectations.** Clinic personnel and study participants want study progress updates. At study start, set clear expectations about what and when they can expect to hear from the research team. Periodic updates help maintain buy-in and enthusiasm.
- Use plain language.** Accessible, easy-to-understand study materials are key. Provide updates in plain language, with colors and graphics to increase interest.
- Say thank you.** Remember to thank clinic personnel and participants for their time and effort. Being intentional and genuine in thanking stakeholders helps foster meaningful relationships.