



CANADIANS WANT MORE OPTIONS FOR REMOTE OR VIRTUAL CLINICAL TRIALS, NEW SURVEY FINDS

Toronto, July 3, 2024 – During the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada’s clinical trials community was forced to adapt its approach to conducting clinical trials, offering innovative options for decentralized or hybrid trials, including virtual or remote participation. These novel approaches have the potential to increase access and equity in clinical trials, but how do trial participants and potential participants feel about them? A first-of-its-kind survey conducted by Clinical Trials Ontario and members of its College of Lived Experience shines light on patient and public perceptions about decentralized and hybrid clinical trials in Canada.

Clinical Trials Ontario (CTO) conducted a bilingual online survey, gaining insights from over three-hundred people in Canada about the perceived benefits and barriers of decentralized and hybrid clinical trials. Co-produced from the idea stage with patient, caregiver, and family partners, the survey found that nearly 80 per cent of respondents want a range of options for in-person, at home and virtual site visits. Respondents also agreed overwhelmingly that decentralized trials would improve trial accessibility and potentially increase the diversity of clinical trial participants.

A decentralized trial (also called a remote or virtual clinical trial), is a trial in which individuals participate in the study from a location outside of the clinical research centre. A hybrid trial has some decentralized aspects.

“Survey respondents felt that decentralized trials can help ease the burden of trial participation, reduce the time and cost of participating in the trial, and could increase their quality of life while in a trial. This means that decentralized trials may be one way to improve accessibility to trials for people in Canada,” says Dawn Richards, Director of Patient and Public Engagement at Clinical Trials Ontario.

The survey emerged from discussions between CTO’s College of Lived Experience and members of the Ontario clinical trials community early in the pandemic. CTO’s College of Lived Experience members were instrumental in all aspects of the project - designing the survey, analyzing its results, and in writing the peer-reviewed publication that has resulted. The College of Lived Experience is comprised of individuals who live in Ontario and are patients, family members of patients or caregivers.

“As someone who has travelled to out-of-town clinical trials to gain access to emerging cancer treatments, I am aware of the time and geographic barriers that trials present. A move to decentralized and hybrid trial options could mean more patients will also be able to benefit,” says Heather Douglas, member of the College of Lived Experience

These are the first findings related to participant perceptions of decentralized and hybrid clinical trials in Canada. They support the importance of ongoing efforts by regulators and other organizations to ensure that decentralized and hybrid clinical trials are feasible.

“We learned that people in Canada want to see a range of options for participating in clinical trials. Our hope is that these results will be considered by those who conduct trials and that they will have implications for policies and regulations related to clinical trials in Canada,” says Susan Marlin, President and CEO of Clinical Trials Ontario.

Read the [open access paper published in Therapeutic Innovation and Regulatory Science](#).



About Clinical Trials Ontario

Clinical Trials Ontario is a leading non-profit organization in the clinical trials community dedicated to strengthening, promoting and capitalizing on Ontario's competitive advantages for conducting high quality clinical trials. CTO works collaboratively with industry, research institutes, patients and the public and other health innovation organizations to improve the clinical trials environment and attract investment to the province, while supporting the highest ethical and quality standards.

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