

The Burden of a Remote Trial in a Care Home Setting: A Qualitative Study

A remote trial is...

A trial that takes place in a non-clinical setting in order to place individuals, rather than investigative sites, at the centre of the research process.

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Can be supported by mobile and wearable technology

Background

Remote trials have the potential to make clinical research participation more accessible for older adults. In order to determine the feasibility of this model, it is essential to understand the burden remote data collection places on participants.

The REACHES study (Remote Assessment of Older People in a Care Home Setting) explored the burden experienced by participants in a remote trial supported by mobile and wearable technology in a care home setting.

Remote trial

The trial focused on implementing a falls prevention programme over an eight-week period. The following technology solutions were selected to collect data from participants in the trial:

- Kinesis QTUG™, a sensor-based medical device that assesses gait, mobility, falls risk and frailty in older adults;
- Aging Research App, a tablet version of the Age-Related Muscle Loss Questionnaire, which assesses the impact of muscle loss on activities of daily living;
- Garmin vivosmart® HR, a wrist-worn device that tracks daily activity, heart rate and sleep patterns.

Methods

A participatory design was used to develop the study protocol. Qualitative methods were employed to assess the burden of the remote trial for staff and residents. These included semi-structured interviews, ethnographic observations and diaries.



Results

A total of 6 residents and 8 staff members took part in the semi-structured interviews (n=14). Results showed that staff experienced extensive burden in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities to support the remote trial, whereas residents reported limited burden. Findings suggest that the experience of burden was not mitigated by the perceived value of the trial.

Staff Burden

- Comprehension
- Time
- Emotional Load
- Communication
- Cognitive Load
- Research Engagement
- Logistics
- Product Accountability

Resident Burden

- Comprehension
- Adherence
- Emotional Load
- Privacy & Security

Where next?

Understanding and mitigating the burden created by remote trials is vital to researchers and companies attempting to scale such a model. Future research could build on the lessons learned from the REACHES study to develop a method to measure the burden remote clinical trial protocols place on patients and other stakeholders involved.