What is accrual?

Accrual refers to the recruitment of patients to a research study.

When a patient consents to take part in a National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) Portfolio Study, they are counted as a single instance of recruitment.

The ADC for a study (Accrual Data Contact) has the responsibility for reporting accrual on a monthly basis.

The ADC will likely be based at the lead site for a research study and will upload accrual for all sites.

If you are based at a non-lead site therefore, it is important that local accrual details are closely monitored and regularly reported to the ADC.

Accrual can come in many forms, including:

- the collection of tissue or blood samples
- patient consent to a treatment regime
- staff or patients answering questionnaires or answering questions during research
- individual members of focus groups
- a set of case notes

When should you count accrual?

Accrual refers specifically to the activity of consent.

If a patient has consented to take part in a trial, they should still be counted as accrual even if they do not complete the trial.

Each participant recruited to a research study can only be counted once, even if an accrual event occurs more than once, for instance a participant completing two questionnaires.

In a multi-site study, recruitment is typically registered for the site and NHS Trust where consent was acquired.

Why do you need to upload accrual?

Accrual data is used as the predominant measure of NHS research activity.

The infrastructure support and support cost funding which Comprehensive Local Research Networks provide for portfolio studies is largely determined by regional accrual activity. This also has the potential to raise new funding streams and generate additional income for the Trust, which can support research activity in the future.

Underreporting of accrual therefore undersells the work of researchers and can be detrimental for future levels of R&D funding and support.
A guide on how to upload patient recruitment data

How do you report accrual?

The reporting system has been streamlined to make the process easier and to help keep track of your research projects:

1. Head to the web link www.ukcrn.org.uk/index/library/info_sys.html to download an accrual data template spreadsheet. This spreadsheet will be used to enter the recruitment information for your study.

2. Once you have entered the accrual data for each recruit for the month, save your copy of the sheet and head back to the web link above. Click the ‘Login’ tab at the top right corner of the page. The NIHR portal website should now open in a new window.

3. Use this page to log into the Portfolio Database and then select the link ‘Study Portfolio and Accrual’. At the next page select the link ‘Process Accrual Data’. You should then be at the introduction page for uploading your data - click ‘next’.

4. You should now be able to see the study you are uploading accrual for, and by clicking on the study title you can ‘upload accrual’. Click here, and select the reason you are uploading accrual from the dropdown menu, and then choose the month you are uploading accrual for. If you have no accrual to report for the month, you can select this as an option from the menu.

5. Next, attach a copy of the spreadsheet containing the accrual data, and add any comments in the comments box if you need to. Check over the data – if anything looks incorrect you can delete the upload and start the process again. If you are happy, then click finish.

Accrual data for each month should be added to the same spreadsheet continuously and uploaded on a monthly basis until the completion of the study.
The template requires the input of basic information about the study, such as the date the participant was entered into the study, the site where consent was gained, and a running total of recruitment.

Completing the columns with a red heading is mandatory, whilst completion of the other columns is optional. The acronym for the study needs to exactly match what is on the portfolio database, whilst the ‘Study ID’ needs to be the UKCRN/NIHR ID.

It is important to protect the confidentiality of participants by avoiding the use of patient identifiers. If gender, DOB, ethnicity and postcode information constitutes patient identifiable data, it may be appropriate to leave these columns blank.

The optional ‘Site Code’ and ‘Ethnicity’ columns require the input of codes. The relevant codes can be found at www.ukcrn.org.uk/index/library/info_sys.html

The ‘Entry Event’ column should state ‘Randomisation’ if the study is randomised. If not, ‘Registration’ should be written here.

The ‘Entry Event No’ column is used to determine whether a study has multiple randomisations. If a sample was randomised onto a study three times, the figure should be ‘3’. If a study is not randomised, this figure for each recruit will always be ‘1’.

Finally, you should also take care to ensure that the Study Patient ID is not a hospital or NHS number or any type of data that could be traced directly back to the patient.

Further Information

More information and FAQs on uploading accrual are available at http://www.ukcrn.org.uk/index/clinical/portfolio_new/P_acrual.html. If are working on a portfolio study at University Hospitals of Leicester, and would like one-on-one support with completing and uploading an accrual report, you can also contact a UHL Portfolio Research Coordinator for assistance:

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