Searching for cures: Inner-city and rural patients' awareness and perceptions of cancer clinical trials

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Inner-city and rural patients’ awareness and perceptions of cancer clinical trials

Abstract: Fewer than 5% of cancer patients participate in clinical trials, making it challenging to test new therapies or interventions for cancer. Even within that small number, patients living in inner-city and rural areas are underrepresented in clinical trials. This study explores cancer patients’ awareness and perceptions of cancer clinical trials, as well as their perceptions of patient-provider interactions related to discussing cancer clinical trials in order to improve accrual in cancer clinical trials. Interviews with 66 former and current inner-city and rural cancer patients revealed a lack of awareness and understanding about clinical trials, as well as misconceptions about what clinical trials entail. Findings also revealed that commercials and television shows play a prominent role in forming inner-city and rural patients’ attitudes and/or misconceptions about clinical trials. However, rural patients were more likely to hold unfavorable views about clinical trials than inner-city patients. Patient-provider discussions emerged as being crucial for increasing awareness of clinical trials among patients and recruiting them to trials. Findings from this study will inform communication strategies to enhance recruitment to cancer clinical trials by increasing awareness and countering misconceptions about clinical trials.

Keywords: Clinical trial; cancer; health communication; knowledge; behavior; attitudes.

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