

Background

On May 20th every year, the world celebrates International Clinical Trials Day. This event marks the anniversary of the first ever-documented clinical trial, which was conducted with sailors in the navy in 1747. The HRB-TMRN celebrates this important occasion with the help of the younger members of our community through the Network's '*Schools Teaching Awareness of Randomised Trials (START)*' programme.

START is an outreach initiative that incorporates both a competition for primary schools and a fun activity day to celebrate International Clinical Trials Day. It was launched in 2016 and asks young children (8-12 years old) to simulate and report their 'very own randomised trial'. In addition to celebrating International Clinical Trials Day, START seeks to help children, and ultimately the public, to think critically and ask and rigorously answer scientific questions. For health care interventions, this is best achieved through the design, conduct, analysis and reporting of fair tests of treatments i.e., randomised trials. START helps children develop their understanding of these concepts.

START has been well received by primary school students and their teachers, by the research community, by the Health Research Board (as funder) and has captured the imagination of the public. An exploration of the initiative, from the viewpoint of participants, has been completed and a paper for publication is in preparation. One issue raised, by the teachers participating in that exploration, was the need for additional and more explicit resources to be made available to support their engagement with the competition. The teachers suggested that more child-orientated resources would also be useful. These findings are the focus of this study.

Aim

To develop the online resources for the START initiatives (the resources for teachers and for children).

Methods

This project will be used to develop the online resources of the START initiative. We will, support a student in their exploration of the current resources, to carry out a scoping exercise to see the types of resources that support similar initiatives (involving the public and children) and develop the online resources of the START initiative accordingly. We suggest that the formats for the resources may include, but are not limited to, information sheets, videos and podcasts.

While a student with a background in media studies may be best placed to undertake this work, we are aware that other undergraduate students may bring an appropriate skills set to this project.

Actions

- To review the current resources available to support the participants of the START initiative
- To produce a plan in relation to the development of the current guidance available

- To develop online resources for the teachers to support every stage of the trial process
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Resources

(We have borrowed these examples from The HRB-TMRN Peoples Trial)

To explain what is a clinical trial – for example <http://www.healthtalk.org/peoples-experiences/medical-research/clinical-trials/what-are-clinical-trials-and-why-do-we-need-them>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=-nGDthPgWnE

Linked to why clinical trials are important and the idea of fair comparisons

Iain Chalmers and fair comparisons

Other examples Measuring immeasurable diseases Paul Wicks

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVBrWmA52J4>

Bad Science – Ben Goldacre <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4MhbkWJzKk>

Historical <https://vimeo.com/15051229>

Pink Pirate song <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UjueTksDRR4>

Randomisation https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=-nGDthPgWnE

<https://www.informedhealthchoices.org>

<https://community.cochrane.org/news/blogshots---making-evidence-short-and-shareable-for-social-media>

<http://www.evidentlycochrane.net/evidently-advent-video-5/>

Conclusion

It is widely accepted across the trial community that taking part in randomised trials can be beneficial for healthcare, but when there is a lack of public understanding around trials, this means recruitment and overall acceptance of trials is limited. The HRB-TMRN recognises that public awareness and a broader understanding of trials can lead to making trials easier to conduct and offer greater choice, for example, to patients. By educating young children about the importance of trials, the outreach initiative of START, contributes substantially to initiatives addressing this problem.

This study will provide an opportunity to develop the online resources for future iterations of the START initiative and future participants.