
How can clinical trialists serve the needs of clinicians and patients more effectively?

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COMPARISONS OF PATIENTS', CLINICIANS' AND RESEARCHERS' AGENDAS



BIOGRAPHY

Dr Sandy Oliver is a Reader in Public Policy at the Institute of Education, University of London. Her special interest is in public involvement in planning and conducting research, and in using the findings. She has ten years' experience as an advocate of maternity service users and their families, followed by twelve years' experience as a university researcher developing systems to support public involvement in international, national, regional and local research and policy programmes.

ABSTRACT

Seeing "gaps" requires more than observation; it requires imagination of what might be and comparison with what is. Seeing "gaps" in the knowledge about the effects of treatments requires the imagination of clinicians and patients; imagination about what it might be helpful to know to make decisions, and comparing this with what is already known from research, or what might feasibly be asked in future research.

If patients and clinicians provide the imagination, the next step is to capture the products of their imagination. Has anyone done this before? If so, how? What did patients and clinicians want from research? Can we learn from past efforts?

A systematic search found studies describing patients' (96) or clinicians' (156) priorities for research or outcomes for assessing the effects of treatment. A further 42 studies compared patients' and clinicians' priorities in this area. Only nine compared such priorities with research or researchers' priorities. These studies spanned a wide range of health conditions (e.g. cancer, cardiovascular disease, infection), age ranges (e.g. neonatal, women's health, later life) and clinical services (e.g. anaesthesia, complementary medicine).

We should learn from this literature how to involve patients and clinicians in setting research priorities, and what those priorities are.

RELEVANT COMPETING INTERESTS

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