Background: What do we know about Clinical trials?

Clinical trials are medical research involving real patients used to evaluate the safety and efficacy of new experimental trials. ClinicalTrials.gov is a database available to the public that disseminates clinical trial information and assists researchers with participant recruitment. Because there is such a large variety of syntax and readability, it might be difficult for non-experts to identify whether patients are eligible for specific trials. The public's understanding of the clinical trial eligibility criteria used for participation is unknown, and the requirements can be hard to decipher.

Method: Where do we come in?

Using the eligibility NCI survey on Redcap, we will decode 100 clinical trials on lung cancer from clinicaltrials.gov. The survey asks a series of questions about eligibility to determine which patients are eligible for the study. The comprehensibility of the eligibility criteria is assessed using categorical and numerical measures about cancer stage, metastatic role, biomarkers, therapies, age, gender, and performance status.

Results

As a high school student, I found biomarkers and the role of metastases to be the most difficult to comprehend because of my lack-of scientific expertise. I used the internet to learn about medical language and terminology, intricate human anatomy, and biological molecules found in lung cancer. I also read a few lung cancer-related medical publications, which gave me more insight into what I was reading.

Conclusions

If you do not have an extensive scientific background, clinical trials on clinicaltrials.gov can be arduous to comprehend the material. If patients want to be part of clinical trials, the website needs to be improved because it is hard to understand with little to no deep scientific understanding. To keep the eligibility criteria section simple: medical jargon should be avoided. I believe if Clinicaltrials.gov made sections clearer, non-experts would be able to comprehend more and not get lost in medical jargon. Based on my research, I came to the conclusion that the categories that are evidently listed are the ones one can comprehend the most. As a result of our data, I believe that the eligibility criteria should be standardized in order to increase the number of qualifying patients enrolled in clinical trials. Fewer than 1 in 20 adult cancer patients enroll in cancer clinical trials. Patients are often fearful of participating in clinical trials, but with clear information cancer patients can potentially increase that statistic.

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References