

Disseminating Resources to Support Representative Patient Enrollment Into Cancer Clinical Trials: Sequential Adaptive Testing of Social Media Campaigns

S. Makhnoon, M. Shaik, A. Sridhar, L. Starkey-Wood, L. Pomeroy, C. Duria, J. Lee, S. Pruitt, D. Gerber

Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center, UT Southwestern Medical Center

1. Background

Participation in cancer clinical trials remains a challenge. While programs exist to reduce barriers, these resources often fail to reach the patients who need them the most. A major gap is effective marketing and dissemination strategies. Social media offers a scalable channel for outreach, yet evidence-based guidance on how to leverage these platforms is scarce. To address this, we developed a marketing campaign to test public service announcements regarding programs that support diverse enrollment into cancer clinical trials.

2. Goals

The purpose of this study was to better understand audience engagement behaviors in response to social media ads designed to increase awareness of resources to support patients in cancer clinical trials. We aimed to understand whether social media ad interventions motivate patients and community members to engage with cancer clinical trial resources.

3. Solutions and Methods

Eight social media campaigns were developed to engage:

- Adults aged 18 or older who were either present within a one-mile radius of the Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center (SCCC) in Dallas, Texas or have been during the prior 24-hour period
- Community members who reside within a 200-mile radius of SCCC

We tested the ads through a rapid experimentation process, often termed “A/B trials,” to efficiently evaluate multiple design choices using live environments and users. A team of social media advertisement experts, in collaboration with clinical researchers, designed a marketing campaign for implementation across Meta platforms. The campaign occurred in three A/B stages and lasted from May to September 2025. Eight ads were developed that varied in message and visuals including individualistic vs. altruistic headlines, individual images vs. group images, and image vs. text-based ads; four were geared toward patients defined as within a one-mile radius of one of the cancer center locations and four were for the community audience defined as within a 200-mile radius of our cancer center.

4. Outcomes

Over five months, the eight ads had a total of 1,063,505 impressions, reached 318,587 individuals, and generated 12,018 outbound clicks for over an overall click rate of 1.13 percent for a cost of \$0.41 per click. Among the four patient-facing ads, the group image had the highest click rate compared to ones depicting a single person, image, or text only (1.48 percent vs <0.7 percent). Among the four community facing ads, the altruistic call to disseminate information about clinical trial resources outperformed the other three (2.3 percent vs <0.5 percent). The engagement resulted in 9,820 views to the cancer center’s webpage containing program information about cancer clinical trials and 116 unique clicks to search for cancer clinical trials.

5. Lessons Learned and Future Directions

With a modest \$6,000 social media investment, we drove significant engagement with cancer clinical trial resources, showing that digital campaigns can effectively raise awareness among patients and communities. For most cancer centers, marketing and dissemination related to clinical trial resources are unassigned or shared responsibilities. Future efforts should embed marketing expertise and infrastructure into trial support operations to ensure equitable participation.

Category: Community-Engaged Data Collection, Analysis, and Dissemination – Completed Project – Staff