Convenience Studies: Ethical Considerations

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Disclaimer

• I have no conflicts of interest to declare.

• The views presented are my own.
Objectives - Convenience Studies

• Description

• Potential benefits in research involving pregnant/lactating women

• Ethical considerations

• Summary
Convenience Studies - Description

- Convenience sampling involves
  - Collecting data from individuals who are easily accessible to the investigator
  - Type of non-probability (non-random) sampling

- Ex) Women who present to labor & delivery or outpatient clinic during a certain time period

Hedt and Pagano 2011
Convenience Sampling - Benefits

- Potential benefits
  - Convenience of sampling
  
  - Helpful for pilot studies and for hypothesis generation

  - Qualitative or quantitative data collection

  - Often faster, less expensive to implement than random sampling
Convenience Sampling - Disadvantages

- Disadvantages
  - Selection bias: participants usually not representative of the population

- Ex) “the recruited study population was less ethnically diverse, more affluent and more educated than the background population of pregnant women in Vancouver”
Convenience Sampling - Ethical Considerations

• Several requirements for clinical research to be ethical

• Fair subject selection is one requirement:
  ➢ Scientific objectives, not privilege or vulnerability, should determine the selection of participants
  ➢ Fair balance of burdens and benefits from research participation

• Ex) May be more convenient to recruit pregnant women who speak English, have transportation, etc.

Emanuel et al. 2000
Convenience Sampling - Ethical Considerations

• Could be ethically appropriate for
  • Recruitment when resources are limited

• Little is known about a behavior or exposure, and pilot data would be useful

• Attempts made to reduce biased selection

• Best when merged with additional methodologies for random representative sample

Webster et al. 2012
In summary

• Convenience studies, while limited by selection bias, can be a feasible and ethically appropriate way to begin filling research gaps with preliminary or pilot data
Thank you
