Facebook was a useful recruitment strategy for a randomized clinical trial of a lifestyle approach to reverse Metabolic Syndrome

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Background
Enhanced Lifestyles for Metabolic Syndrome (ELM) is a multi-site, randomized controlled clinical trial with the aim of reversing metabolic syndrome (MetS). MetS is diagnosed when at least 3 of the following 5 risk factors are present: high blood pressure, high blood sugar, high triglycerides, a large waistline, and low HDL cholesterol. MetS treatments suggest that lifestyle changes can reverse the diagnosis, however the best specific protocol has not been established. Selection criteria were siphoned from the survey as soon as they failed an eligibility criterion. Study completion and publication is dependent to a randomized MetS clinical trial with demanding inclusion and exclusion criteria. Facebook was a cost-effective, efficient strategy to recruit eligible participants to a randomized MetS clinical trial with demanding inclusion and exclusion criteria. Campaign keywords, temporal and geographic control, which enhanced Reach to the target sample in a short time frame, are critical moderators of this recruitment strategy.

Methodology
A Facebook ad campaign, 14 days in length, was developed utilizing the ELM inclusion and exclusion criteria and Facebook guidelines. The geographic region for the ad was a 20 mile radius around Henrietta, NY. The ad was posted in English. The Facebook ad utilized 11 key phrases to drive page impressions:

- Cholesterol
- Stress management
- Obesityhelp.com
- About stress management
- Body fat percentage
- Management of hypertension
- Blood pressure
- Fitness and wellness
- NutritionFacts.org
- Weight loss (fitness and wellness)

The Facebook ad included a link to a survey using the Qualtrics platform (Provo, UT) for persons interested in learning more. Respondents to the survey were over 45 years of age and female.

Results
The Facebook ad as designed provided a potential MARKET audience of 690,000. The ad appeared 59,449 times with a REACH to 33,243 unique Facebook accounts; ad appearance is also termed IMPRESSIONS. 1,160 unique accounts CLICKED on the ad. CLICK costs were temporally modified based on observed and projected Facebook activity to optimize campaign performance. Ad performance is detailed in Figure 1. Facebook metrics revealed that most respondents were over 45 years of age and female.

Figure 1. Progression of Facebook Ad Respondents (N)

Conclusion
Facebook was a cost-effective, efficient strategy to recruit eligible participants to a randomized MetS clinical trial with demanding inclusion and exclusion criteria. Campaign keywords, temporal and geographic control, which enhanced Reach to the target sample in a short time frame, are critical moderators of this recruitment strategy.

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Reference
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