Guide to Creating Materials for Older Volunteers

Parkinson's Disease
Education Consortium

THE MICHAEL J. FOX FOUNDATION
FOR PARKINSON'S RESEARCH

Although these best practices apply to recruitment and retention messaging for all volunteers, they are especially pertinent to older participants. Consider the following:

1. Be direct and specific.

Create clear, concise content and include direct action items. For example, "Talk with your doctor about your current medications and opportunities for trial participation."

2. Limit your key points.

– Break up information into short sections.
– Stick to three to five points per section.
– Use bullet points for key takeaways.

3. Make actions manageable.

Present follow-up actions as numbered, sequenced steps.

4. Use positive statements.

Frame instructions in a positive manner. For example, "Write down how you're feeling, even if you are not experiencing side effects."

5. Use the active voice.

Focus on actions the reader can take. For example, "Use the journal provided to keep track of the medications you take and when you take them."

6. Include illustrations when relevant.

Use simple visuals to help readers understand information.

7. Stay patient-friendly.

Avoid complex diagrams and medical jargon.

Keep in mind that older volunteers may have visual changes or other limitations. Make it as easy as possible for them to read and understand your recruitment and retention materials with the following tips:

1. Use fonts that are easy to read, such as Times New Roman **or Georgia.**

2. Make font large: at least 12-point, but maybe up to 14-point.

3. Use a lot of white space.

4. Avoid words with all CAPS as the text can be difficult to read.

5. Limit use of special formatting.
Avoid using **Bold**, *italics* or underlined formats that make text less readable; also, avoid condensed or e x p a n d e d text.

6. Left justify text; it's easier to read and follow.
Also, avoid wrapping text around pictures and graphics.

7. Be careful with color choice.
Avoid using yellow, blue and green in close proximity because they are difficult to distinguish.

8. Keep layouts simple.