

## BRIEF REPORT

# Lessons learned in clinical research recruitment of midlife Latinas during COVID-19

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### Abstract

**Objective:** The purpose of this brief report is to describe lessons learned in recruiting and enrolling midlife Latinas in a pilot study to reduce cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk during the menopause transition. We also discuss strategies implemented to overcome the challenges presented by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

**Methods:** *Menopausia, Salud y Corazón* is a two-group (intervention, waitlist control), repeated measures study. The intervention consists of CVD risk education, coping skills training, physical activity, and stress management. Eligible participants are peri- and early postmenopausal Latinas age 40 to 60 years, free of CVD. From August 2020 to October 2021, we screened 110 women recruited from cultural events and health fairs ( $n = 56$ ), local businesses ( $n = 24$ ), and snowball sampling ( $n = 30$ ). Of these, 60 were eligible for inclusion and 41 enrolled.

**Results:** Strategies that contributed to successful recruitment included: a primarily Latina bilingual (English, Spanish) research team; flexibility with location and scheduling of data collection; and multiple modes of communication (ie, mailings, phone calls, and text messages). Additionally, we addressed Latino cultural values such as *respeto* (respect), *familismo* (loyalty to family), and *confianza* (trust). In response to COVID-19, we included virtual recruitment strategies, limited in-person visits, and distributed community resources for COVID-19.

**Conclusion:** We have found that despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, midlife Latinas are receptive to clinical research engagement. Researcher flexibility, multiple recruitment modalities, a bilingual research team, and communication strategies that address cultural values are essential elements for the representation of midlife Latinas in research.

**Key Words:** Clinical trial – COVID-19 – Latinas – Middle aged – Research design.

**Video Summary:** <http://links.lww.com/MENO/A943>.

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In 2019, the number of Latinas age 45 to 54 years in the United States (US) reached over 3.5 million, accounting for 17% of US women in this age group.<sup>1</sup> Despite the National Institutes of Health mandating the inclusion of historically marginalized populations in clinical research, Latinas continue to be underrepresented in studies of midlife women, particularly during the menopause transition.<sup>2,3</sup> For example, only 4% of participants in the Women's Health

Initiative and 8% of participants in the Study of Women's Health Across the Nation are Latina.<sup>4,5</sup> Thus, our current understanding of the menopause transition, its impact on health, and symptom management is mostly from data with non-Latina White women. Common barriers to the inclusion of Latinas in clinical research are: a lack of knowledge about research opportunities; culture and language discordance with the research team; logistical concerns such as transportation

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