Purpose

To describe the compliance requirements for the advertising of research projects. This policy encompasses all projects reviewed and approved by Bellberry's Human Research Ethics Committees (HRECs) as per the National Statement in Ethical Conduct in Human Research 3.1.19-3.1.21 and 5.2.15.

Guidance

All study specific advertisements must be reviewed by the Bellberry HREC. The HREC will review the information in the advertisement for appropriateness.

Generic advertising

Generic advertisements not related to specific research projects (e.g. to increase healthy volunteer databases) are part of the business strategy of an organisation and do not require review by the HREC as per the National Statement 5.2.15 *If general promotional material (e.g. posters or websites encouraging participation in clinical study research) is not related exclusively to a specific project, then ethics review is not required*.

Examples of generic advertising:

Help Advance Medical Research – Join Our Healthy Volunteer Community!

Are you aged 18-65, in good health, and interested in making a real difference?

We're building our Healthy Volunteer Database for upcoming clinical trials at [organisation name]. By joining, you'll:

✅ Contribute to advancing potential new treatments
✅ Receive study-related care at no cost
✅ Be compensated for your time and participation

No obligation to participate – just stay informed about opportunities that suit you.

📩 Sign up today at: [website regarding joining the organisation's healthy volunteer database]
📞 Questions? Call us on [phone number]

Interested in Participating in Clinical Research?

At [organisation name], we're always looking for people to take part in ethically approved clinical research studies.

Whether you're healthy or living with a health condition, your involvement could help improve treatments and health outcomes for others.

Why get involved?

✅ Gain access to potential new treatments
✅ Learn more about your health
✅ Receive study-related care at no cost

View current research opportunities:
[website regarding the organisation's current/upcoming clinical research studies]

Participation is always voluntary, and our team will support you every step of the way.

Study specific advertising

All formats of advertising, including print, electronic media, and social media, must be approved by the HREC prior to use. Information packs, participant brochures, sponsor brochures and informational videos are all considered recruitment material, and all require approval.

Details of where the advertisements will be placed must be provided (e.g., location of posters, type of publication for print advertisements, type of social media). Advertisements or posters to be publicly displayed must have appropriate authorisation from the site/premises (e.g., an advertisement to be placed on noticeboards at a university must have the approval of the university). This authorisation does not need to be provided to the HREC.

Advertising must:

- Clearly state what the study is about.
- Refer to treatment as ‘investigational’ or ‘potential’.
- Use neutral terms such as ‘invited’ or ‘suitable’ instead of terms such as ‘eligible’ and ‘qualify’, e.g., “to see if a study is suitable for you”.
- Be a final version if printed advertising.
- Be submitted exactly as they will appear, so the HREC can assess the impact of design details such as photographs, other images, font sizes, styles, and colours.
- Be a script or storyboard for audio or video advertisements. Final versions do not require submission. Where changes are made to the final version these must be reviewed by the HREC via an amendment.
- Be a broadcast proof for audio ads.
- Include the name and location of the researcher and research facility.
- Present in summary form, the criteria that will be used to determine appropriateness of the study.
- State the time or other commitment required of the participants.
- State the location of the research and the person or office to contact for further information.
- Be an appropriate representation of the study where photographs are used.

Advertisements must not:

- Imply that the treatment under investigation is safe and effective.
- Represent to potential study participants that the study will be of direct benefit to them or coerce participation in any way.
- Be false or misleading.
- Imply certainty of a favourable outcome of the research.
- Include any disclaiming language.
- State dollar amounts of payment for time and inconvenience. The only exception is where only healthy volunteers are to be recruited who have previously consented to be contacted (see below paragraph, ‘Statement of payment’).

Examples of study specific advertising:

Do You Have Atopic Dermatitis (Eczema)? Participate in Our Research Study Today!

Researchers at [organisation name] are conducting a clinical study to assess an investigational treatment for people with atopic dermatitis (eczema).

You are invited if you:

- Are aged 18-65 years
- Have been diagnosed with moderate to severe atopic dermatitis (eczema)
- Experience ongoing symptoms such as itching, redness, or skin irritation

What's involved?

- Study-related care and assessments at no cost
- Access to a new investigational treatment
- Reimbursement for your time and travel

📍 **Location:** [organisation name and city name]

🗓️ **Study duration:** [e.g. 12-24 weeks]

Find out more or register your interest:
[website regarding the specific research study] | [phone number] | [email address]

Participate in Our Clinical Research Study Investigating a Potential Lung Cancer Treatment!

Researchers at [organisation name] are conducting a clinical study to assess an investigational treatment for people with non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC).

We are seeking participants who:

- Are aged above 18 years
- Have been diagnosed with advanced or metastatic NSCLC
- Are no longer responding to standard therapies or have limited treatment options

What's involved?

- Regular study visits over approximately 6 months
- Study-related care, tests, and procedures provided at no cost
- Reimbursement for travel and related expenses

Participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time.
Your current healthcare will not be affected by your decision.

To learn more or register your interest:
Visit [website regarding the specific research study]
Or contact our research team: [phone number] | [email address]

Generic vs study specific advertising

The distinction between generic and study specific advertising should be based on its content. An advertisement is considered generic if it only includes publicly available information, such as that found on registers like clinicaltrials.gov or ANZCTR and does not contain recruitment language or images. For example, study listings on trial websites would be considered generic advertising.

Recruitment language or images are content that are used to incentivise research participation. This includes any recruitment-focused language or imagery designed to attract individuals to a study. Examples include:

- Invitations to participate ("Participate in our study"; "Sign up now")
- Benefits and incentives ("Earn extra money"; "Receive free treatment")
- Appeals to interests or values ("Help advance science"; "Make a difference in your community")
- Urgency and exclusivity ("Limited spots available"; "Don't miss out.")
- Visuals depicting participation
- Contact information providing details on how to get involved (email addresses, phone numbers, or links to sign-up forms.)

These elements are designed to capture attention and encourage individuals to take action towards participation. Study specific advertising that includes these elements must be reviewed by the HREC.

Statement of payment

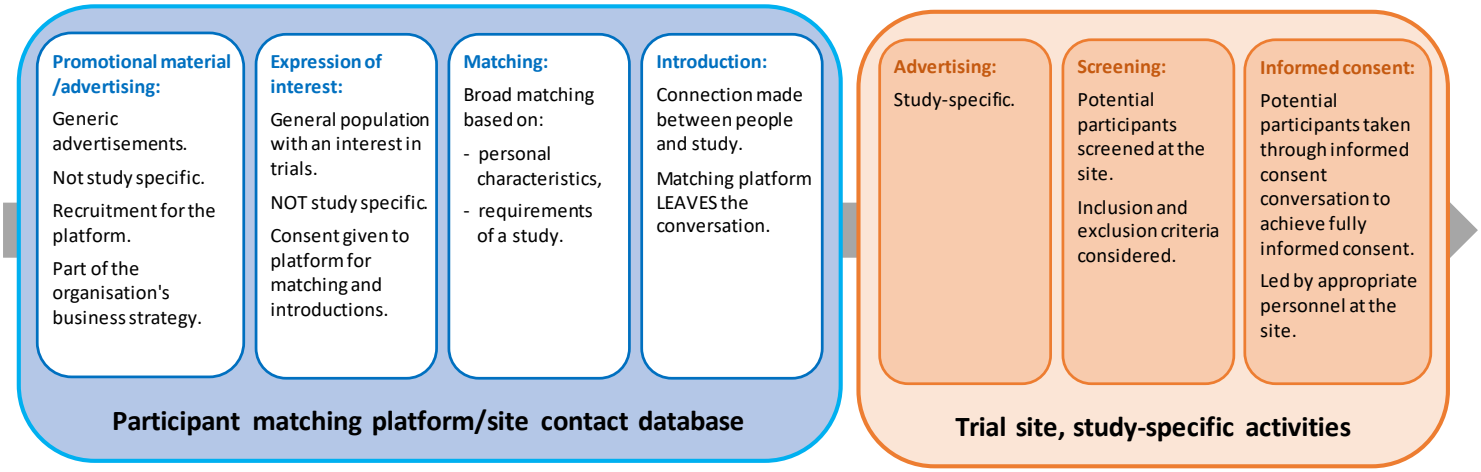
Advertisements for recruitment may state that participants will be paid for time and inconvenience. This information should be discretely positioned in advertisements and should not be in enlarged or bold font.

Advertisements must not state dollar amounts for payment for time and inconvenience except where an organisation undertaking research with healthy volunteers has access to an organisational database of persons who have previously consented to contact regarding research involvement opportunities, the site can disclose the payment in forms of contact. The payment should be discretely positioned in the advertisement and should not be in enlarged or emboldened print.

For guidance, the intention of these directives is to prevent a promise of payment overriding the seriousness of participating in a research study.

Recruitment vendors/third party providers

The material used by a recruitment vendor for their participant matching is not within the ambit of the HREC approval. However, sites should submit study-specific advertising for review.



Social media

When social media advertising is intended, six areas should be considered prior to HREC submission:

- Content
- Medium
- Participant selection
- Moderation
- Privacy
- Confidentiality

A social media policy must be in place at each site that specifically covers the utilisation of advertising on social media platforms for participant recruitment. It must include a clear explanation of the proposed use of social media and featured content, addressing questions such as:

- How will security of information and privacy of individuals be maintained?
- Who will be responsible for monitoring and posts?
- Who is going to manage monitoring and posts?
- What is going to happen with information obtained from monitoring?
- Is there a plan in place to address these issues?

Media coverage

Whether HREC review is required for media coverage or interviews depends on the nature of the content and the questions being asked. Review is needed if the content pertains to specific studies, but not if it is about general information regarding the study site or clinical trials.

For example:

- Interviews of staff or participants about general topics unrelated to a specific study (e.g., about the site, how a person can become a participant, what is involved in being in a study) are considered business strategy and do not require review.
- Interviews of staff or participants discussing their involvement in a specific clinical study are considered study-specific and require HREC review. An amendment must be submitted, including the details of the interview and proposed questions.

References

National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2025)