

What am I Missing Here?

Thought-Provoking Questions for the Clinical Research Industry

By Norman M. Goldfarb

100. If you want a good answer, ask a good question

Sponsors send site questionnaires to research sites so the sites can provide information for sponsors to evaluate. However, if the sponsor does not provide basic information about the study, such as important eligibility criteria and exclusionary medications, problematic procedures and equipment, approximate start date and number of visits, it's tough for the sites to provide meaningful information. Without detailed information, asking for budget estimates is just an IQ test. Some of this information may be proprietary or not yet exist, but leaving it out without providing a reason suggests to sites that the sponsor isn't serious about the questionnaire. It's no surprise that questionnaire return rates are so low. If sponsors want meaningful answers, they should ask meaningful questions. What am I missing here?

101. I'm afraid something just came up

Sponsors strongly encourage investigators to attend investigator meetings. If the investigator declines to attend because of a conflicting obligation, the sponsor may threaten to drop the investigator from the study. It may be an empty threat, but to avoid the headache, the investigator can accept the invitation, let the sponsor incur the costs for airplane tickets, hotel room, etc., and then cancel at the last minute, with no repercussions. Sponsors can avoid these expensive games by taking investigators at their word and establishing long-term relationships. What am I missing here?

Do you know a better way? Is something getting under your skin?

Please send your thoughts for future columns to ngoldfarb@firstclinical.com.

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