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My experience joining a remote clinical trial.

(BYLINE)

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For a while, when I thought of joining a clinical research study, I would imagine frequent travel, long appointments, and strenuous testing. I'd picture something that would loom as a huge undertaking for the participant; the type of commitment that would require its own special calendar on the kitchen fridge.

Yet with every study I write recruitment materials for, I grow more curious, and more eager to find another way to contribute to research. I recently enrolled in a remote study, and have now experienced firsthand that, although participating in clinical research is a serious commitment, it doesn't have to be a challenging one.

Checking expectations and enrolling.

Despite the convenience of joining a study remotely, I still did plenty of research before making a decision. After reading the study listing, I explored the sponsor's website, read the informed consent form, and looked up the vaccine. I asked some friends what they thought and weighed the pros and cons.

Pros included:

- Getting the study vaccine (which is already approved for use)
- No appointments
- Contributing to clinical research
- Compensation

Cons included:

- Blood sample collections

Yes, everyone's favorite fundamental laboratory test and enrollment obstacle. Regular bloodwork is a standard feature in many clinical research studies – I don't think I've seen a protocol without it. The big difference with this study, and this makes a BIG difference, is that the blood draws are done at home. This was the perfect opportunity to give myself a little push despite some nerves, so I decided to enroll.

At-home participation.

After agreeing to take part, there was only a small list of things I needed to do:

1. Download the study app for surveys
2. Draw my blood using the provided device, complete a survey in the app, then package and drop off my sample to ship
3. Get the study vaccine at my local pharmacy
4. Complete a few more at-home blood draws over the course of a year, each one taking no more than ten minutes of my day

Just a few days after my enrollment, it arrived: the first microneedle capillary blood collection device. Compared to the well-aged, standard bloodwork practice of a needle and tube from the inner elbow, this thing was kind of revolutionary for me.

There was no anxiety, no tourniquet, no “pinch”, no woozy... *events*. I was suddenly wondering if my regular blood draws could someday be as easy as sticking something on the side of my arm and pushing a button.

I haven't even spoken directly to a study staff member, though there is contact information if I need it. I suppose a remote study might not be for everyone, but in my case, this hands-off process is exactly what enabled me to participate.

That's really it.

I have a great appreciation for the people who make this sort of participation in clinical research possible. There were many who volunteered for the initial development of the vaccine, who *did* go into an office and got lots of traditional bloodwork done. People received placebos so that the researchers had a baseline to compare the investigational product with. Someone programmed the app I have on my phone that makes completing surveys so simple. Someone wrote the email reminders that I have a blood sample kit being mailed soon.

Considering all this and more, I come after a long line of people in the process here. My biggest lift during this study was going to the UPS Store in my pajama pants and rainbow Crocs. But the importance of being a part of the study is not at all diminished by that fact, and the researchers really need every last participant. My data is in there, anonymously contributing to progress, and it's well worth the small, healing circle of tiny microneedle dots on my arm.

If you're feeling inspired to explore clinical research, you can learn more about why trial participation is so important [here](#).