

## The most effective strategy for recruiting a pregnancy cohort: a tale of two cities.

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### Abstract

#### Background

Pregnant women were recruited into the Alberta Pregnancy Outcomes and Nutrition (APrON) study in two cities in Alberta, Calgary and Edmonton. In Calgary, a larger proportion of women obtain obstetrical care from family physicians than from obstetricians; otherwise the cities have similar characteristics. Despite similarities of the cities, the recruitment success was very different. The purpose of this paper is to describe recruitment strategies, determine which were most successful and discuss reasons for the different success rates between the two cities.

#### Methods

Recruitment methods in both cities involved approaching pregnant women (< 27 weeks gestation) through the waiting rooms of physician offices, distributing posters and pamphlets, word of mouth, media, and the Internet.

#### Results

Between May 2009 and November 2010, 1,200 participants were recruited, 86% (1,028/1,200) from Calgary and 14% (172/1,200) from Edmonton, two cities with similar demographics. The most effective strategy overall involved face-to-face recruitment through clinics in physician and ultrasound offices with access to a large volume of women in early pregnancy. This method was most economical when clinic staff received an honorarium to discuss the study with patients and forward contact information to the research team.

#### Conclusion

Recruiting a pregnancy cohort face-to-face through physician offices was the most effective method in both cities and a new critically important finding is that employing this method is only feasible in large volume maternity clinics. The proportion of family physicians providing antenatal and post-natal care may impact recruitment success and should be studied further.

**Keywords:** Pregnant women; Research subjects; Cohort studies