

Title: Integrated Participant Digital Storytelling (IPDS): an innovative method for disseminating complex participant stories

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Background

To help ensure trial findings have a meaningful impact, it is essential that study results and conclusions are effectively shared in an engaging and accessible way. Using innovative methods not only captures the thoughts, experiences, and needs of study participants, but also illustrates the nuances and complexity of their journeys in a meaningful and diverse way. We have developed Integrated Participant Digital Storytelling (IPDS), a method which explores and conveys the journeys of multiple participants in an integrated and streamlined manner.

Methods

IPDS is a method of applying oral storytelling techniques to data gathered using qualitative approaches. Many people's stories are integrated into one participant journey; an output based on a constructed person telling their story using multimedia tools such as graphics, audio-recordings, or video.

This is achieved through 5 stages; **stage 1**, understanding the story, involves collecting, analysing, and interpreting qualitative data and determining key experiences (themes). **Stage 2, creating the storyteller**, involves drawing on study participant characteristics. **Stage 3, shaping the narrative** draws on key points/events in the data. **Stage 4, produce the story** through storyboarding and script writing using anonymised participant quotations and, **stage 5, review the story** by sharing, revising, and finalising the product of stage 4 with team members.

Findings

We used IPDS to produce digital stories for two case studies.

Case 1: Within the Research on Surgeons and Engagement with Trials (ReSurgEnT) study, data from 32 semi-structured interviews and a stakeholder workshop with 13 methodologists, surgical trainees, consultants, and research nurses, was used to develop five key strategies for enhancing trainee engagement with trials. Using IPDS we produced a 6-minute animated story, using 'storytellers' to represent study participants and their experiences. The digital story was shared internationally via YouTube and twitter and trainee research collaborative websites.

Case 2: Developing an online Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) for the use of digital tools for recruitment and retention to trials. Using the five themes developed from 16 qualitative interviews with five stakeholder groups we developed four digital stories (2-3 minutes each). These videos were shared via YouTube and formed part of the MOOC.

Discussion

Using IPDS allowed us to share complex participant stories in an accessible and engaging manner that preserved the participants narratives in their own words. Those conducting qualitative research in trials should consider using IPDS to help draw the attention of stakeholders and enhance visibility and comprehension of study findings.