Quality criteria for paediatric clinical trial sites – an Enpr-EMA initiative

Working group on criteria for paediatric clinical trial site standards

2024 annual meeting of Enpr-EMA

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Challenges and gaps in paediatric trials

- Known barriers to the conduct of paediatric clinical trials, leading to delays in site identification, setup & recruitment
- Research infrastructure that is limited and not always fit for purpose
- Sites delivering paediatric clinical research need to meet unique requirements to ensure quality and performance
- Individualized and fragmented requirements by sponsors are compounded by the multinational and multijurisdictional nature of many paediatric trials
- Heterogeneous landscape of site capabilities and development stages, across different settings, capacity, experience, and legal and regulatory context

Objective

Deliver combined findings and recommendations

Two diverse* working groups of stakeholders were set up to:

WG 1: Develop a common understanding of what quality of paediatric sites means with regards to paediatric clinical trial sites and what matters to the different stakeholders involved in the conduct of a clinical trial, including children and their parents/caregivers

WG 2: Identify/map existing quality criteria/standards for paediatric sites

Scope for this work:

Paediatric site standards across jurisdictions, paediatric age ranges, and types of sponsor

The work intends to drive opportunities for rollout of site standards and improvement of sites, with adequate resources

** 27 representatives from patient groups, site networks, academic institutions, industry sponsors, contract research organizations, regulatory bodies, non-profit organizations and c4c from Europe, Canada and the USA*

Working Group Methodology

Process

Adhered to working methods and instructions outlined by the EMA for multistakeholder Working Groups

Regular separate remote meetings

Interim updates and draft reports provided throughout the year

Questions and Discussion Points

Relevant input to work (site quality and rare diseases, paediatric specialties, research networks, innovative treatments…);

Focused on specific questions

Identified relevant evidence and scope

Literature Review

Extensive literature search and thematic mapping

Selected sources of information: survey conducted by Enpr-EMA international working group to understand how drug developers and CROs select investigational sites

Work by the c4c consortium to identify standard criteria for the clinical sites delivering trials in a large clinical trial network, including preliminary results from a c4c questionnaire on site standards

Findings & Recommendations

Alignment across WGs for synergy

Input GCP IWG, Enpr-EMA Chairs

Compilation into one joint document

Results

- A document focusing on 4 questions:
  - What is a paediatric site?
  - Why do we need paediatric site standards?
  - What do we mean by quality of a paediatric site?
  - How to identify a fit-for-purpose paediatric site?

23/07/2024
EMA:

Quality criteria for paediatric clinical trial sites – an Enpr-EMA initiative

Recommendations by the Enpr-EMA working group on criteria for paediatric clinical trial site standards.

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Key findings: What is a paediatric site?

Defining a paediatric site:

- *A core definition of a paediatric site is a specific location where drugs, medical devices, and other therapeutic interventions are evaluated in paediatric participants, that may include a specific or a broader age spectrum from neonates up to less than 18 years of age*
- *Paediatric sites are composed of a team led by a principal investigator, usually a paediatrician, with appropriate location(s)/facility(ies) to execute the trial according to the protocol*
- *The evolving nature of a site across the trial lifecycle should be kept in mind (e.g., considering trials across levels of care, innovations such as decentralized elements in clinical trials).*
- *These distinctions however do not change site and investigators responsibilities under GCP guidelines, laws, and regulations*

Key findings: Why do we need paediatric site standards?

Because:

We need to identify sites that are most likely to conduct a trial on time, on budget and according to the specifications outlined by the sponsor, regulators, and GCP

Therefore:

- *Paediatric standards should reflect the level of the quality of a paediatric site*

- *Recommendations should facilitate site selection and initiation of paediatric trials, as well as support the development of paediatric research infrastructure, without placing unwarranted burden of requirements to existing regulations for trial sites*

Key findings: What do we mean by quality of a paediatric site?

- Quality of a site relates to different concepts and approaches: trial protocol/goals, GCP, capacity, preparedness, performance, quality domains and measures
- Factors that may influence and are interconnected with quality requirements
- Results from the Enpr-EMA survey and c4c questionnaire
- Results from the literature review

Category Headings	Descriptions & Queries
Staff Experience	Does the staff have the appropriate experience in studies & years? Are they adept at conducting trials or willing to learn?
Requirements (Training)	Is there adequate training? Access and review of relevant guidance documents
Documentation (Quality Management)	Presence of an internal Quality Assurance procedure Are evaluation processes established?
Infrastructure	Is the environment child-friendly? Required equipment and services for study Staff adept at working with children and families
Cycle Times (IRB, Contracts, Budget)	Use of standard templates (agreements, indemnities, etc.) Personnel for budget negotiations with sponsors
Patient Engagement	Conduct of patient orientation Provision of general information to participants Relevant participant material availability

Key findings: How to identify a fit-for-purpose paediatric site?

- *All sites that set out to enrol children and young people, whether they are paediatric-only or also (or mainly) recruit adults, should meet the same specific site requirements; there should be no opportunity to downgrade those requirements in case of "adult"- mainly sites*
- *There are examples of sponsor or network-driven assessments of known and recognised paediatric sites of excellence (with existing frameworks to identify these sites)*
- *Recommendations*
  - Qualifications and experience rolling into preparedness & performance
  - Facilities
  - Site performance
  - Quality management
  - Patient engagement

Next steps and future directions

- Circulate draft report to other Enpr-EMA networks for comments after annual meeting
- Compile feedback into final draft report
- Draft posted on Enpr-EMA website for a one-month public consultation
- Paper for publication (journal profile: well reputed, broach reach, peer-reviewed and open access)
- Dissemination and awareness, aligned with existing initiatives and other stakeholders