

Clinical trial Site Support Services: a solution for increasing research demand

Clinical trial complexity has reached unprecedented levels. Comparing the period from 2011-2015 to data from 2001-2005, studies collected 88% more data points, required 70% more procedures and included 61% more eligibility criteria per protocol.¹

This complexity, as well as the volume of research conducted, has only continued to increase. Today's studies require more specific patient populations, more sophisticated protocols and more resources to run than ever before. The result is immense pressure on clinical trial sites, which must maintain rigorous quality standards and protocol compliance while managing an ever-growing workload.

Understanding the challenges of today's research landscape

Increasing trial volume and complexity has created a perfect storm for sponsors and sites alike. Sponsors often find their preferred sites—those with the ideal geographic location, patient population and therapeutic experience—unable to take on additional studies due to staffing constraints. Meanwhile, sites face the difficult decision of either turning away valuable research opportunities or risking overextension of their resources. In other cases, medical facilities where patients are already located may not currently be running any trials due to a lack of resources.

Staffing is particularly complex because personnel needs fluctuate throughout a trial's life cycle. During startup, sites need experienced study coordinators to manage documentation, regulatory requirements and patient screening processes. As the trial progresses, the demand shifts toward research nurses for patient care and monitoring, data entry specialists for accurate recordkeeping and pharmacy support for investigational product management. Maintaining full-time staff across all these specialties can be impractical and inefficient, especially when study demands ebb and flow.

The competition for experienced clinical research professionals further compounds these challenges. The specialized nature of clinical research requires staff who understand not only their functional role but also Good Clinical Practice (GCP) requirements, protocol adherence and the nuances of working in a highly regulated environment. This expertise typically develops over years of hands-on experience, making these professionals increasingly valuable and harder to recruit and retain.

Traditional staffing models, which rely on maintaining permanent full-time employees across all necessary functions, are struggling to meet these dynamic needs. Sites find themselves caught between the inefficiency of maintaining excess capacity “just in case” and the risk of missing opportunities or compromising quality due to resource constraints.

As a result, solutions to enable sites to take on more studies faster while maintaining flexibility are emerging, such as those provided by Fortrea Site Support Services.

The evolution of Site Support Services

Instead of sites maintaining full-time staff across all potential research needs, support services provide on-demand, specialized professionals who rapidly integrate into existing operations. This model enables trials, under the central control of a commissioned site, to be undertaken where patients already are.

This approach is not about replacing existing site staff but augmenting their resources. By providing targeted, expert support exactly when it’s needed, sites can maintain operational flexibility, reduce overhead costs and focus on their core mission of conducting high-quality clinical research.

Strategic benefits for sponsors, sites and patients

The key benefit of Site Support Services is the ability to address resource flexibility. Sites can dynamically scale their capabilities, taking on studies that would have previously been impossible due to staffing constraints.

These services enable sites to:

- Take on more diverse and complex studies
- Maintain consistently high-quality research standards
- Reduce study startup times
- Minimize recruitment bottlenecks
- Alleviate administrative burden
- Expand access to clinical trials

This last point is often overlooked. These services can expand access to clinical research. By removing staffing barriers, more sites can participate in trials, particularly in regions or for patient populations that have traditionally been underrepresented.





Navigating implementation

Implementing Site Support Services requires a deliberate and strategic approach.

The process typically involves:

- Conducting an initial capability audit to map existing resources
- Defining clear performance metrics and integration protocols
- Establishing communication channels between site staff and support personnel
- Developing tailored onboarding processes for specialized staff

A flexible framework allows for rapid deployment of expertise and is crucial for success. This means creating systems that can quickly match specialized professionals to specific study needs, ensuring minimal disruption to existing site operations.

Implementation must also include training mechanisms that go beyond basic functional skills, ensuring support staff can immediately integrate into the complex ecosystem of clinical research.

Choosing the right partner can help maximize the benefits of Site Support Services. A partner with a global reach, a deep regional understanding of clinical research delivery and a proven track record of success in key territories can make all the difference in seamlessly integrating preferred sites into research operations.

About Fortrea's Site Support Services

Fortrea's Site Support Services provide on-demand, specialized professionals, enabling sites to take on more diverse and complex studies without risking overextension of their resources.

We offer multiple key benefits to our partners:

- **Global presence:** With staff in 80+ countries across diverse regions such as APAC, LATAM and Africa and extensive knowledge of cultural nuances, we ensure access to your ideal patient populations and therapeutic expertise, regardless of location
- **Staffing across key functions:** Our highly skilled and experienced professionals encompass the four key areas needed by sponsors and sites—study coordinators, qualified research nurses, data entry specialists and pharmacy support
- **Eliminating inefficiencies:** Our flexible model empowers optimization of site staffing strategies, meaning sites do not need to maintain excess capacity; this translates into significant cost savings and improved resource allocation
- **Minimizing logistical burden:** Equipment, supplies, IMP transport and other logistical considerations are managed centrally, optimizing resource utilization while also reducing the potential for disruptions or errors
- **Reducing administrative burden:** Data entry specialists ensure seamless documentation and accurate recordkeeping, minimizing administrative complexities
- **Reducing delays:** Availability of on-demand staff minimizing redundant time waiting for personnel, leading to quicker study startup and conduct
- **Competitive advantage:** By enhancing efficiency, our services help accelerate time to market and maximize the value of limited patent periods

Contact us today to learn more about how we can tailor our **Site Support Services** to your specific needs.

References

1. Data from *GlobalData*. Accessed November 2024.

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