

# Depression Clinical Trial Recruitment Case Study

Breaking Through the Treatment Barrier: Innovative recruitment strategies that reached patients when conventional therapies fell short.



# Demystifying Next-Generation Depression Treatments

Major depressive disorder affects millions of adults across the United States, profoundly impacting daily functioning, relationships, and overall quality of life. While current antidepressant treatments work for some patients, many experience significant limitations including delayed onset of action, inadequate symptom relief, and burdensome side effects like weight gain, sexual dysfunction, and emotional blunting. For these patients, clinical trials represent access to innovative treatments that could offer faster, more effective relief with fewer side effects.

The Sponsor's vision for this Phase 2 program was ambitious: evaluate a novel antidepressant with a unique mechanism of action that could potentially work faster and better than existing therapies. Partnering with our creative and media teams, they addressed the fundamental challenge of reaching patients who had often tried multiple treatments without success and were understandably skeptical about yet another option. The study spanned multiple sites across the United States, with dedicated focus on communicating complex neuroscience in accessible language.

This effort represented more than standard patient recruitment. Each study participant represents someone courageously seeking relief from debilitating symptoms, and success hinged on our ability to communicate genuine hope while setting realistic expectations about investigational research.

This case study demonstrates how thoughtful messaging and strategic media placement can advance depression treatment research while ensuring that innovative science reaches the patients who need new options most.

## 01. GOALS

# 100+ Participants, One Promising Investigational Drug

### Communicate Novel Science Accessibly

Create clear, patient-friendly messaging that explained a new biological mechanism of action without overwhelming patients with technical jargon. The brand needed to convey innovation and hope while maintaining scientific credibility and managing expectations about investigational drug.

### Reach Treatment-Resistant Populations

Develop targeted media to engage patients who had tried multiple antidepressants without adequate relief. The campaign needed to acknowledge past treatment shortcomings while offering genuine hope for a different type of therapeutic approach.

### Navigate Complex Eligibility Requirements

Meet stringent Phase 2 enrollment criteria requiring specific depression severity levels, absence of comorbid psychiatric conditions, and other medical exclusions. The screening process needed to efficiently identify qualified candidates while respectfully managing patient expectations.

### Achieve Rapid Enrollment in Competitive Landscape

Meet aggressive recruitment timelines in a therapeutic area with multiple competing trials. The program needed to generate qualified leads quickly and maintain high conversion rates despite complex eligibility requirements.

## 02. STRATEGY

# Meeting Enrollment Goals Through Precision Marketing

### Translating Complex Neuroscience

- + Developed patient-centric messaging explaining neuroplasticity and neural connection formation
- + Created visuals comparing the study drug's MOA to existing antidepressants
- + Designed materials emphasizing rapid onset potential and once-weekly dosing
- + Balanced scientific innovation with realistic expectations about the study drug

### Strategic Patient Targeting

- + Implemented targeted digital advertising across depression support communities and mental health forums
- + Engaged psychiatry practices and clinics treating resistant depression
- + Created messaging acknowledging treatment history
- + Deployed geotargeted advertising across metropolitan markets near study sites

### Streamlining the Complex Journey

- + Built mobile-optimized prescreener addressing key eligibility criteria upfront
- + Developed clear visit timeline graphics showing 3-month study commitment
- + Created FAQ materials addressing common concerns about study participation

### Managing Quality and Expectations

- + Established prescreening questions for depression severity assessment
- + Created training on empathetic communication about eligibility failures
- + Implemented real-time media tracking dashboard monitoring conversion metrics

## 03. RESULTS

# Recruitment Outcomes That Advanced Science

### Enrollment Achievement

- + Successfully enrolled over 100 qualified study participants
- + Met enrollment target on schedule despite complex eligibility criteria
- + Maintained 88% screen-to-enrollment conversion rate among eligible candidates
- + Achieved steady enrollment pacing across all participating study sites

### Reaching the Right Patients

- + Enrolled participants with average of 2.3 prior antidepressant failures
- + Achieved diverse participant demographics across study locations
- + Successfully recruited 72% of participants from digital outreach channels

### Operational Excellence

- + Maximized media budget efficiency with cost-per-qualified-referral 22% below industry benchmark
- + Delivered complete study toolkits to all sites within 3 weeks of campaign launch
- + Achieved 40% reduction in cost-per-enrollment through optimized channel mix
- + Maintained materials version control across all sites with zero compliance errors

# Building Trust While Delivering Results

The success of this Phase 2 depression trial demonstrates how clear communication of complex science and empathetic patient engagement can overcome recruitment challenges in a competitive therapeutic landscape. By translating novel neuroscience into accessible, hopeful messaging while maintaining scientific rigor, we didn't just meet enrollment goals—we connected breakthrough research with patients seeking genuine alternatives to conventional treatments.

Our approach proved that effective Phase 2 recruitment requires balancing innovation with realism. By acknowledging patients' past treatment experiences while offering genuine hope for a different approach, and by explaining complex eligibility requirements with transparency and respect, we built trust that translated into exceptional study enrollment outcomes.

## Impact at a Glance

- + Enrolled over 100 qualified participants across multiple U.S. sites
- + Met enrollment target on schedule despite complex Phase 2 eligibility criteria
- + Achieved 88% screen-to-enrollment conversion rate among eligible candidates
- + Reached treatment-resistant patients with average 2.3 prior medication failures



**“Recruiting for a depression trial with a novel mechanism requires walking a careful line—you need to communicate genuine innovation and hope while being transparent about the investigational nature of the therapy. We developed messaging that acknowledged patients’ frustration with existing treatments, explained the unique science in accessible terms, and set realistic expectations about the research process. That balance of hope and honesty, combined with materials that truly respected patients’ intelligence and experience, created trust that drove our enrollment success.”**

— Ariana Colozzo-Wells  
Director of Content  
Stark Raving Health

# Your Premier Partner for Clinical Trial Marketing

Stark Raving Health: Where the world's leading research organizations turn for clinical trial enrollment success.

We are more than just a clinical trial marketing agency - we're passionate about transforming seemingly impossible recruitment challenges into enrollment success. We craft integrated experiences that breathe life into complex science, making it instantly accessible and sweeping away barriers that stand between patients and potentially life-changing research.

To learn more, please visit [www.starkravinghealth.com](http://www.starkravinghealth.com)



## SERVICES

- + Strategic Planning
- + Study Branding
- + Study Materials
- + Websites + Prescreeners
- + Media Planning + Buying
- + Referral Management
- + Performance Reporting
- + Video Production

## SOLUTIONS

- + Recruitment
- + Rescues
- + Rare Disease
- + Early Phase
- + Advertising
- + Study Materials

## CONTACT

500 Harrison Avenue  
Suite 3R-B  
Boston, MA 02118  
[hello@starkravinghealth.com](mailto:hello@starkravinghealth.com)  
617.939.9580  
[starkravinghealth.com](http://starkravinghealth.com)