DIVERSITY IN CLINICAL TRIALS EQUALS BETTER TREATMENTS FOR EVERYONE.

People respond differently to medical treatments. That is why diverse and inclusive participation in clinical trials is needed to ensure that treatments are safe and effective for more people living with a given disease. Visit medicalheroes.org to learn more.

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Clinical Recruitment and Specific Disease Areas

As the clinical study recruitment begins, Biogen teams track and report their progress toward the study targets that represent the epidemiology of their respective disease. Given this commitment, 2021 had 100% of Phase 1–4 studies in the U.S. including a plan to recruit participants from underrepresented communities to ensure the study population is representative of the intended treatment population. They also launched an Internal Participant Demographic Dashboard to track and measure the demographic distribution of participants across programs and studies, and to compare directly to epidemiology targets. Within certain disease areas, Biogen has built community and faith-based outreach and education programs for disease awareness and general clinical trial education with trusted organizations such as HEAL Collaborative and Proximity Health Solutions.

In Alzheimer’s specifically, they have sponsored the Bright Focus Foundation’s Virtual Community Outreach Series, bringing sustained Alzheimer’s disease and clinical trial education and access to communities with an underrepresented focus. Additionally, Biogen co-developed a paper with the NMQF titled “A Roadmap for Real-World Evidence Generation in Alzheimer’s Disease.” It highlights how real-world evidence can include larger patient populations that are historically underrepresented in randomized controlled trials.

In Lupus, Biogen collaborated with Saira Z. Sheikh, M.D., Director of University of North Carolina (UNC) Rheumatology Lupus Clinic and Director of the Clinical Trials Program at UNC’s Thurston Arthritis Research Center, to gather insights on barriers to clinical trial enrollment among underrepresented groups. These insights are being used to inform Biogen’s clinical development programs in lupus and address equity in study participation. For the Phase 3 studies targeting systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), Biogen set enrollment targets that reflect the prevalence of SLE in Black or African American and Hispanic and/or Latino communities to achieve appropriate representation. Through partnerships with community-based Preventz Health Solutions and faith-based HEAL Collaborative, along with expert panels of community leaders, HCPs and patient advocates, they participated in seven events across the U.S. in 2021 to educate communities about lupus and clinical trial research.

A Holistic Approach to Inclusion and Equity

Beyond this commitment to the patients and their specific needs, Biogen also focuses on the workers involved in clinical trials. In 2021, they joined the Association of Clinical Research Professionals (ACRP) as part of ACRP Partners in Workforce Advancement™, which works to expand the diversity of the clinical research workforce and to set and support standards for workforce competencies.

Additionally, Biogen has fostered employee collaboration to increase awareness of health equity needs cross-functionally. In 2021, they introduced a Health Equity Ideas Cafe Series to deepen organization-wide understanding of Biogen’s commitment, including representation in our clinical trials and equitable access. The three-part series engaged internal and external guest speakers on themes of lupus awareness, patient voices and community partnerships, and equitable access to healthcare. In addition, Biogen hosted an event with John Sawyor, Ph.D., ABPP-CN and a board-certified clinical neuropsychologist of the Other Side Neuroscience Institute; and Donnie Buttr, M.D., in successful approaches to caring for underrepresented patients.

From their research into healthcare disparities and patients’ needs, Biogen’s approach to health equity is guided by the motivation to help those who have historically been underserved. Concretely, this commitment to health equity looks like: clinical trial diversity, empowering underrepresented groups, engaging employees, and launching new tools to improve accessibility.

Visit Biogen Trial Link to learn more about clinical trials and how you can support equity and access efforts such as these.