

## **Who participates—and why? Characterization, motivation, and experiences of study participants at the Hamburg Bernhard Nocht Center for Clinical Trials (BNCCT) between 2010 and 2023 (CharME Study)**

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**Background:** Clinical trials are essential for developing new drugs and vaccines. While patients in therapeutic trials may be motivated by personal health benefits, motivations among healthy volunteers are more diverse. Given the decline in clinical and industry-sponsored trials in Germany and decreasing willingness to participate, this study examined the characteristics, motivations, and experiences of study participants at the BNCCT between 2010 and 2023.

**Methods:** In July 2024, 1,751 registered individuals were invited via email to complete an anonymous online survey. The questionnaire included 53 multiple-choice questions on sociodemographic characteristics, motivations, and study experiences. Inclusion criteria were adulthood, prior registration via the BNCCT contact form, and consent to participation and data protection. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics (STATA,  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Results:** A total of 308 datasets were analyzed (response rate 19%). The mean age was 52.5 years (51% female, 48% male). Higher educational levels were overrepresented. Key motivations included contributing to research (97% rated important/very important), interest in the research topic, and financial compensation. Motivations varied by education, income, and employment status. Altruistic motives were stronger among highly educated participants, whereas health benefits and free medical examinations were more important for unemployed or lower-educated participants. Overall experiences were very positive, with over 90% rating information, care, and competence as good or very good. Most participants (96%) would participate again.

**Conclusion:** Participation in clinical trials is driven by multifactorial motivations influenced by sociodemographic characteristics. These insights may support targeted recruitment strategies and improvements in study management.