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# Physician engagement in research

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## Background

Physician engagement in research is generally low. One way to encourage providers to participate more is to reward them with an incentive or a "nudge". Typical financial incentives offer sub-optimal solutions. An alternative option available to physicians is to participate in research studies, and to reflect on how that participation might influence practice, in exchange for credits toward annual recertification.

## Research questions

RQ1: Can non-financial incentives, such as CME credits, increase physician recruitment?
RQ2: Does highlighting of non-financial incentives in recruitment differentially increase participation rates by physicians?

## Methods

Participants:
- N = 200 family physicians
- Ontario, Canada; including participating physicians in TRANSFORMATION project

Recruitment:
- Email and snowball sampling from Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs)
- In person and conference booths

Manipulations ("nudges"): within recruitment email (Figure 1)
- MAINPRO eligibility in Times New Roman 12-point font (Control), OR
- Times New Roman 14-point font, in bold (Bold).

Analysis:
- Comparison of recruitment rates across conditions; independent samples t-test

## The use of MAINPRO credits to increase participation among physicians

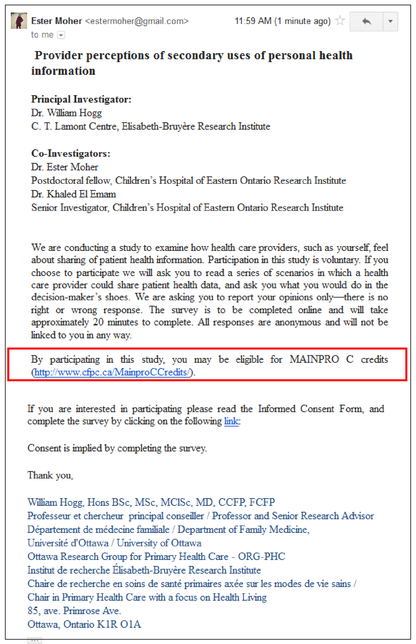
### Nudges and incentives with physicians

Nudges are any form of manipulation that reinforces a particular action over it's alternative, without forbidding the alternative outright (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). Financial incentives can act as nudges. Even small incentives can have a large effect; however, they may "crowd out" intrinsic motivations to participate (Kreps, 1997), making future recruitment more difficult. Further, physicians may be most concerned with the interests of their patients and on practice-related learning (Page et al, 2011; Gunn & Rhodes, 1981), rather than on financial incentives. As such, extrinsic and intrinsic benefits of using incentives with physicians may be complicated by unique trade-offs and interests.

### MAINPRO credits

Non-financial incentives are generally not as successful in recruitment (VanGeest et al, 2007), except in the case of continuing medical education (CME) credits (McDermott et al, 2003; Johnston et al, 2010). This strategy may be especially effective because incentive and survey are both designed to help providers improve care. MAINPRO, or MAINtenance of PROficiency credits, are required to maintain membership and designation with the College of Family Physicians of Canada. Family physicians must complete 250 credits every 5 years (see Figure 2), half of which may be from programs that provide the opportunity to reflect on, and improve, care. Physicians are able to participate in a research study, and submit a report (see Figure 3) in exchange for two credits. This accreditation is equivalent to 4 hours (one half-day) in a more traditional course.

Figure 1. Recruitment email



Ester Moher <estermoher@gmail.com> 11:59 AM (1 minute ago)
to me

**Provider perceptions of secondary uses of personal health information**

**Principal Investigator:**
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We are conducting a study to examine how health care providers, such as yourself, feel about sharing of patient health information. Participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose to participate we will ask you to read a series of scenarios in which a health care provider could share patient health data, and ask you what you would do in the decision-maker's shoes. We are asking you to report your opinions only—there is no right or wrong response. The survey is to be completed online and will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. All responses are anonymous and will not be linked to you in any way.

By participating in this study, you may be eligible for MAINPRO C credits (http://www.cfpc.ca/MainproCCredits/).

If you are interested in participating please read the Informed Consent Form, and complete the survey by clicking on the following link:

Consent is implied by completing the survey.

Thank you,

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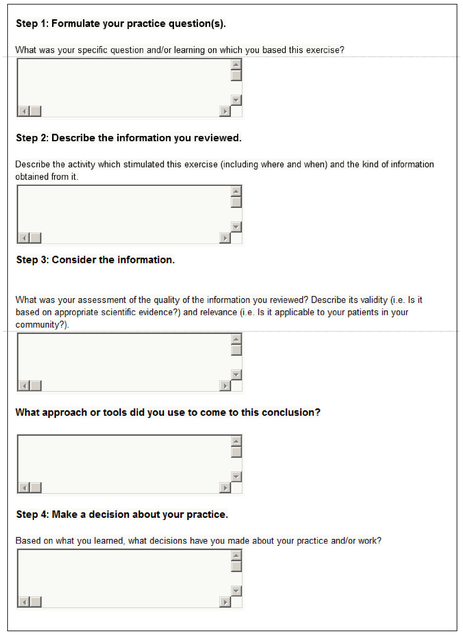
Figure 2. MAINPRO-eligible activities

Pre-accredited learning activities:
- Conferences, courses, and workshops
- Advanced life support programs
- Small group learning
- Traineeships and fellowships (organized)

Self-directed learning activities:
- Family, emergency medicine exams
- **Linking Learning to Practice***
- Pearls™ (reflective exercise)
- Practice audits, quality assurance
- Provincial practice review
- Traineeships and fellowships (self-planned)
- Degree and diploma studies

*used by participants in this study

Figure 3. MAINPRO-C report form



**Step 1: Formulate your practice question(s).**

What was your specific question and/or learning on which you based this exercise?

**Step 2: Describe the information you reviewed.**

Describe the activity which stimulated this exercise (including where and when) and the kind of information obtained from it.

**Step 3: Consider the information.**

What was your assessment of the quality of the information you reviewed? Describe its validity (i.e. Is it based on appropriate scientific evidence?) and relevance (i.e. Is it applicable to your patients in your community?).

**What approach or tools did you use to come to this conclusion?**

**Step 4: Make a decision about your practice.**

Based on what you learned, what decisions have you made about your practice and/or work?

## Anticipated results

MAINPRO eligibility should encourage participation
- Especially robust when notice is bold

The majority of respondents should elect to apply for MAINPRO credits for participation
- Especially robust when notice is bold
- Facilitates knowledge translation of our work: more reflection → more employment in practice

## Conclusions

Given the preliminary stages of this work, no conclusions have been derived. Incorporating CME with research could act superadditively, maximizing recruitment and knowledge translation of findings.

Conflict of interest:
Khaled El Emam is the CEO of Privacy Analytics, a software company. Affiliation with Privacy Analytics Inc. does not influence our objective presentation of the research conducted in this submission.

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