

Case study

Revitalizing recruitment in a lupus rescue study:

A collaborative approach by **Quest Diagnostics and PatientsLikeMe**

Clinical studies are essential for driving medical innovation and ensuring therapies are safe and effective for patients. Yet many trials fall short, often becoming rescue trials when they face slow enrollment, poor retention, or operational delays.

For sponsors, getting a trial back on course is about more than avoiding setbacks; it's an opportunity to protect investments, preserve competitive advantage, and ensure patients gain access to potentially life-changing therapies.

For a trial to be successful, sponsors must identify and enroll the right patients, and then ensure they remain engaged from start to finish. Without a targeted, patient-centric recruitment and retention strategy, even well-designed studies may risk delays or may never advance beyond the clinical stage. This is why sponsors should adopt and prioritize innovative approaches to connect the right patients to their trials at the right time—and keep them engaged throughout the journey.

Limited recruitment success at a top 10 pharmaceutical company

In 2022, a top 10 pharmaceutical company launched a lupus clinical trial with highly restrictive criteria. The study required patients to be in an active flare, a period where symptoms such as inflammation, pain, and potential organ damage are heightened. Although the trial needed only 8 randomized patients to close, the narrow inclusion criteria made enrollment extremely challenging.

In fact, recruitment proved to be so difficult that by 2024, the struggling sponsor made the decision to work with several new vendors—including **PatientsLikeMe**, one of the largest online communities for connecting patients and keeping them engaged throughout a clinical trial.

Revitalizing enrollment with Quest Diagnostics and PatientsLikeMe

Over a 7-month period in late 2024, PatientsLikeMe's recruitment strategy was focused on utilizing patient-reported data and traditional digital methods, including search engine marketing and paid advertising, to get patients started in the enrollment process. Although they were successful in engaging some patients, there was still opportunity for a targeted recruitment approach to help accelerate referrals and meet enrollment goals.

In mid-2025, PatientsLikeMe collaborated with Quest Diagnostics to help accelerate recruitment. Quest leveraged its vast de-identified clinical database and recruitment capabilities to help identify and connect with patients who fit the study's restrictive criteria. Using ICD-10 codes, age, zip code, and other information, Quest pinpointed individuals likely to meet the trial's strict inclusion requirements and conducted email outreach.

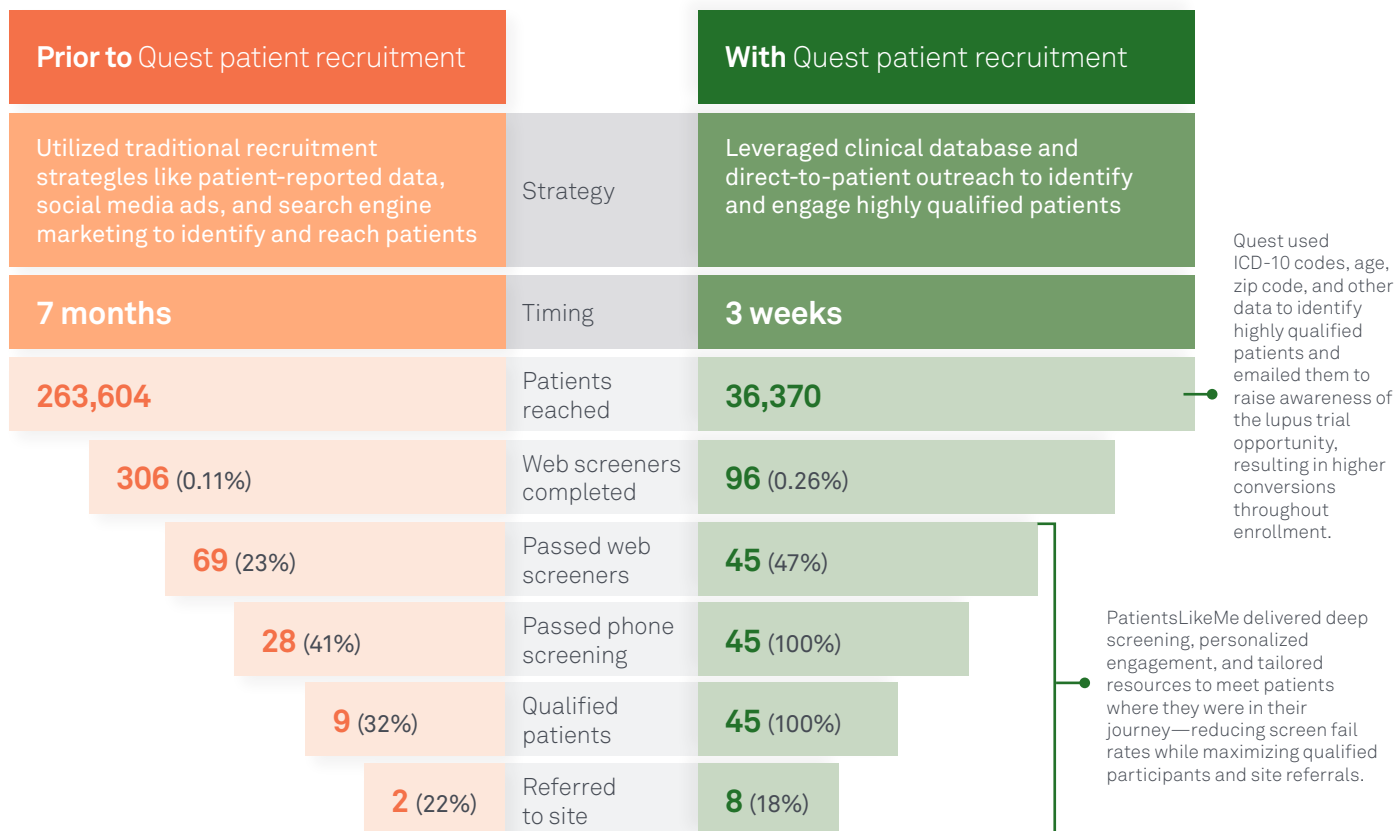
The results were immediate: within just 3 weeks,

47% 

of the patients Quest reached out to and who completed the web screener, passed the web screener—more than double the percentage that were passing prior to Quest's involvement.

Using Quest's recruitment solution, PatientsLikeMe qualified 5 times more patients and significantly increased site referrals compared to traditional strategies, proving that identifying the right patients from the start and keeping them engaged through an effective retention strategy drives downstream success.

PatientsLikeMe recruitment and enrollment success



Improving enrollment efficiency through precision recruitment

When strict inclusion criteria make an already difficult recruitment process even more challenging, traditional tactics often fall short. Broad strategies such as social media ads and search engine marketing often cast too wide a net, reaching many, but rarely the right patients.

The success of this lupus rescue study underscores a vital lesson in clinical trials: **effective research begins with identifying the right patients and supporting them every step of the way.** By combining Quest's recruitment capabilities with PatientsLikeMe's trusted engagement model, the 2 organizations delivered a scalable, patient-centric solution that reinvigorated a struggling trial. This collaboration didn't just accelerate enrollment and streamline engagement—it transformed the trajectory of the study.

As the industry continues to face challenges with recruitment and enrollment, it's clear that data-driven and integrated approaches are essential. In some cases, an innovative approach may even be the difference between stalled progress and a breakthrough that reaches the patients who need it most.

Learn more about patient recruitment with Quest Diagnostics.
Biopharma.QuestDiagnostics.com/PatientRecruitment

Visit PatientsLikeMe.com to learn more about PatientsLikeMe.

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