



Digging Into Dilemmas of Pragmatic Clinical Trials

Sponsored by the National Institutes of Health
Virtual, November 4-5, 2025

This 2-day workshop will share knowledge from the NIH Pragmatic Trials Collaboratory and explore emerging issues to help advance pragmatic research that benefits providers and recipients of healthcare. The workshop will focus on the perspectives of providers, healthcare systems, regulators, and payers that can inform better approaches to research embedded in healthcare delivery. A series of engaging panels will discuss considerations for research in healthcare systems across a variety of communities; platform trials as an emerging method; implications of pragmatic trials with null findings for future pragmatic research; and the role of pragmatic trials in comparative effectiveness research of artificial intelligence algorithms.

In 2012, the NIH Pragmatic Trials Collaboratory was developed to address issues of major public health importance by generating evidence during the delivery of routine care. To date, the NIH Collaboratory has launched 35 pragmatic trials that are conducted within healthcare systems at over 1,400 clinical sites. Over the course of these trials, we have learned much about generating evidence capable of driving change in complex and evolving healthcare systems, including the many unique challenges and opportunities of pragmatic research.

Day 1 of the workshop will focus on developing participants' understanding of the landscape for pragmatic research, including stressors on the healthcare system and barriers and opportunities for real-world research, and the potential of platform trials as an emerging method. David Zaas, president of Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist, will deliver a keynote presentation describing the state of healthcare delivery in the United States and the constraints on healthcare delivery systems that researchers must understand. Panel 1 will explore the needs and priorities of healthcare systems across communities. This will include identifying appropriate considerations and circumstances for conducting research in settings where healthcare systems face challenges in providing care, hearing perspectives from healthcare systems that are embracing research and those that are uncomfortable with it, and exploring strategies for building trust and credibility to better understand the priorities of healthcare systems, providers, and communities. Panel 2 will discuss platform trials as a method for integrating research into healthcare delivery. Panelists will describe considerations and barriers relevant to the conduct of platform trials and share examples and lessons from novel platform trials.

Day 2 will explore today's challenges and emerging opportunities in pragmatic clinical trials, including what can be learned from pragmatic trials with null findings, and the role of pragmatic trials in a time of increasing use of artificial intelligence. Panel 3 will focus on the experiences of NIH Collaboratory Trials with null findings. This will include examining what is gained from pragmatic trials with null findings and a discussion of how implementation outcomes can inform the interpretation of results from these trials. Panel 4 will focus on artificial intelligence, describing the types of healthcare AI tools that can and should be evaluated in pragmatic trials, identifying the characteristics of healthcare AI that complicate evaluation in clinical research, and considering how pragmatic trials embedded in healthcare systems can accommodate the pace of change in healthcare AI.