Targeted Measures to Enhance Research Conduct During The COVID-19 Pandemic in the Field of Brain and Behavioral Health

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BACKGROUND

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic brought two months of campus-wide limited operations at UNM which extended to both main campus and UNM HSC. This shut down caused restricted access to multiple clinic populations, some still in place, limiting in-person study recruitment opportunities. The pandemic also presented a need for increased social distancing measures to protect both staff and patients for study recruitment and data collection.

REMOTE RECRUITMENT

- Remote recruitment via REDCap contact information forms.
- Remote informed consent via REDCap.
- Remote data collection:
  - Interview Data
  - Biometric Devices
  - mEMA Application

REMOTE INFORMED CONSENT

- The remote informed consent form is sent to an eligible patient via email through REDCap.
- The email provides a link that allows a potential participant to review the entire consent electronically, while on the phone with a study researcher. Once the consent is reviewed, a participant can use designated signature fields to sign remotely. Upon completion they receive a downloaded copy of the consent form for their own records.
- The submitted form is stored in REDCap.

REMOTE DATA COLLECTION

- ENRICH-2: Stress Reactivity and Self-Regulation in Infants with Prenatal Alcohol Exposure, COVID-19 Supplement:
  - Interview data collected remotely via REDCap survey forms sent to participants’ email addresses.
- Maternal physiological data including heart-rate, physiological stress, and sleep collected via Garmin wearable devices.
- Maternal alcohol use, substance use, and emotional regulation surveyed 3 times daily via cellular app “mEMA.”

CONCLUSION:

Planning for the HEALTHy Early Development Study:
- Heart rate, respiration and sleep data were collected remotely via pressure sensors measuring movement placed under the feet of a child’s crib.
- Participants were provided a manual with step-by-step instructions to install the sensor.
- A coordinator was available to guide participants through the installation process by phone or video call.
- Data was transmitted wirelessly via the participant’s WiFi network.

REMOTE DATA COLLECTION Cont.

- Novel methods for remote recruitment and enrollment have allowed for continued engagement of target populations.
- Remote data collection methods in response to COVID-19 restrictions have allowed for continued research operations and have minimized missing data.
- Participants must have access to a smartphone or computer.
- Limited ability to observe information in real time.

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