

# CTSA Informatics Team Develops Smartphone App to Help Recruitment to Clinical Trials

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The single most important obstacle to performing clinical research is recruiting people to participate in clinical trials. Remarkably, the majority of clinical trials in the US are not completed because not enough participants are recruited. Supported by the Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA), the CTSA Informatics team has developed an innovative smartphone app that conveniently connects potential volunteers to clinical trials. The team is lead by [Dr. Peter Elkin](#), Professor and Chair of Biomedical Informatics and Informatics Lead for the UB CTSA.

Several innovations make this app a powerful approach to enhancing recruitment to studies

The app uses the GPS function of smartphones to connect potential volunteers to studies that are located nearby, an important advance over currently available systems such as [clinicaltrials.gov](http://clinicaltrials.gov)

Trial information is automatically extracted from the UB Clinical Trials Management System, eliminating the need for researchers to register trials to be included in the app.

The app uses natural language processing technology developed by Dr. Elkin, allowing participants to search for studies by typing in the name of their disorder. This approach eliminates the need for potential volunteers to “guess” key words or titles of studies.

The app can be shared widely throughout the CTSA consortium since the GPS function and extraction of data from clinical trial management systems will work at many sites.

Once a participant identifies a study about which they would like more information, a single touch connects them with the study coordinator (email or text).

Dr. Elkin and his team are planning to perform a multisite study, with UB as the lead institution, to test the effectiveness of the new app compared to other recruitment strategies.

Members of the Informatics team who contributed to the development of the app include Christina Joshi, CTSA Senior Analyst Programmer, in addition to Daniel Schlegel, PhD, a postdoctoral associate, and Edwin Anand, MD, a clinical fellow, both in the Department of Biomedical Informatics.

For more on the cell phone app see these links: [Jacobs School of Medicine and Biosciences](#) and [University News](#)

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Dr. Peter Elkin and Christina Joshi of the CTSA Informatics Team