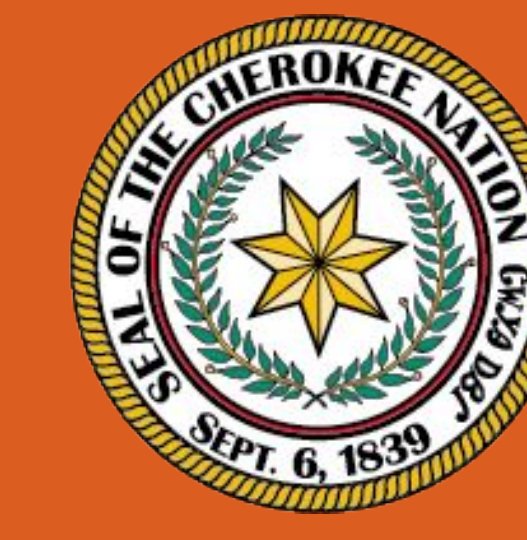


The Influence of COVID-19 on Contraception: A Cross-Sectional Analysis of Disrupted Clinical Trials



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BACKGROUND

- The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated barriers to contraceptive services and disrupted the progression of ongoing clinical trials (CTs) in several fields of medicine¹⁻⁴.

OBJECTIVES

- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has not yet been quantified in research related to contraceptive care.
- The aim of this study was to identify contraception-related clinical trials that were prematurely discontinued.

METHODS

- ClinicalTrials.gov was searched to identify contraception-related trials, and where applicable, reasons for discontinuation.
- Statistical tests were conducted to determine if there was an association between enrollment in trials and reason for discontinuation (COVID-19 vs. other reasons).
- Associations were also examined between trials discontinued due to COVID vs. other reasons by funding source and location.

RESULTS

- 12 (11.21%) of 107 contraception-related studies were discontinued between January 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021.
- There were a total of 4,614 individuals enrolled in discontinued trials, with a median enrollment of 18 (IQR: 5 - 276).
- Two trials explicitly stated COVID-19 as a reason for termination, four reported sponsor-requested termination, two reported recruitment issues, one reported funding issues, two studies did not report a reason and one reported principal investigator departure (Figure 1).

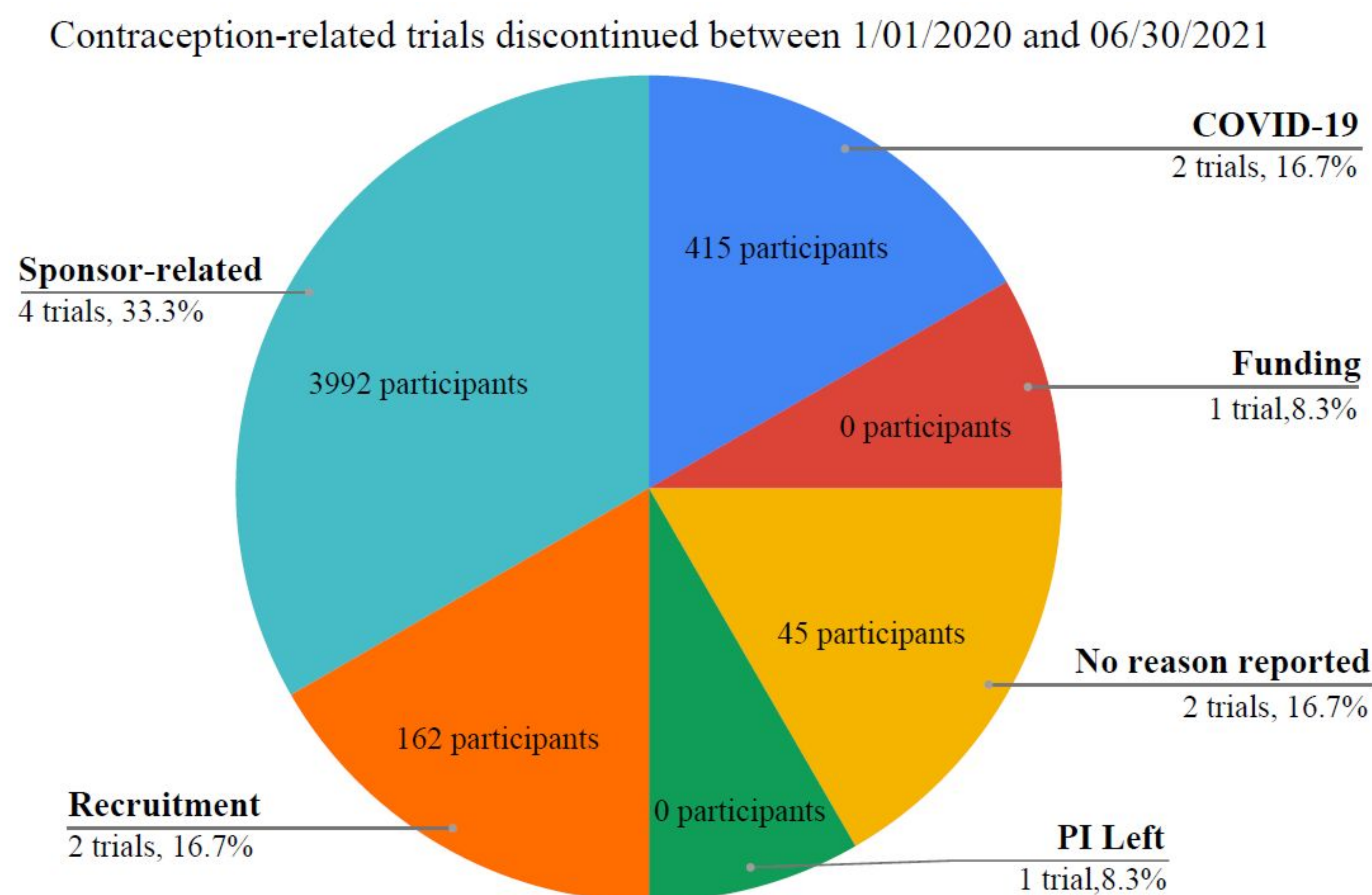


Figure 1. Reasoning for contraception-related trial discontinuation including number of enrolled participants.

CONCLUSION

- While 10 of these 12 discontinued trials did not explicitly state COVID-19 as the reason for discontinuation, we postulate that it may have been a contributing factor.
- CT enrollees may have experienced disruption to their contraceptive care due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The interruption of contraception-related CTs raises concerns for patient safety, especially given the possible negative and long-term effects of discontinuing contraception, such as unintended pregnancy.
- Findings from this study highlight the importance of developing strategies for safely continuing clinical research amid global emergencies that will almost certainly arise in the future, especially in such an important area as contraception.

KEY REFERENCES

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