

Clinical Trials Less Accessible for People Most in Need

A new report highlights U.S. regions that lack access to lifesaving clinical trials.

June 28, 2024 By Laura Schmidt

[Clinical trials](#) are valuable for people seeking to try novel treatments that are not yet commercially available, yet many such trials take place in major metropolitan areas on the coasts, excluding large numbers of people who could benefit from participation, according to a [news release](#) about a new report from the think tank the Milken Institute.

The Milken Institute report, [“Distance as an Obstacle to Clinical Trial Access: Who is Affected and Why It Matters,”](#) highlights the lack of clinical trial accessibility across the United States, which can lead to poorer health outcomes and more.

“Very few Americans are ever approached to participate in clinical research studies, and this report demonstrates that the lack of sufficient infrastructure creates a major gap in our ability to engage research participants in all the places where they live, work, shop and get their care,” said Esther Krofah, executive vice president of Health at the Milken Institute, in the news release.

The report found that coastal counties are more likely to host a clinical trial compared with those farther inland. What’s more, residents of counties located more than 60 miles from a clinical trial typically had lower incomes and education levels, a higher rate of disability and less internet access compared with closer counties.

Affluent suburbs, college towns and urban areas are rarely over 60 miles from a clinical trial, while agricultural counties and American Indian reservations are more likely to be over 60 miles from a trial.

Additionally, after locating regions with the highest prevalence for certain chronic illnesses and diseases, researchers found that clinical trials are not always close to these areas.

For example, despite clusters of counties with high rates of diabetes in New Mexico and Appalachia, most people in those areas must travel large distances to reach the nearest clinical trials. The same is true of areas with high rates of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias in Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas.

"This report provides detailed, actionable intelligence on where to deploy trial resources such that they will make large improvements in terms of patient access," said report coauthor Andrew Friedson, director of health economics at the Milken Institute. "We highlight where trials are not and where high-prevalence populations are. Put those together and you have your highest return locations if you are trying to knock down distance as a barrier to access."

To learn more about clinical trials, read Cancer Health's recent feature "[2024 Cancer Health 25: People Who Power Clinical Trials](#)," which highlights the power and promise of clinical trials.

To read more, click [#Clinical Trial](#). There, you'll find headlines such as "[Improving Clinical Trial Participation for Latino Pediatric Cancer Patients](#)," "[New Effort to Include People With HIV or on PrEP in Clinical Trials \[VIDEO\]](#)" and "[Cancer Clinical Trials Save Lives, and Diversity Matters](#)."