Implementation of decentralised trial procedures for the ECRAID-Prime clinical trial

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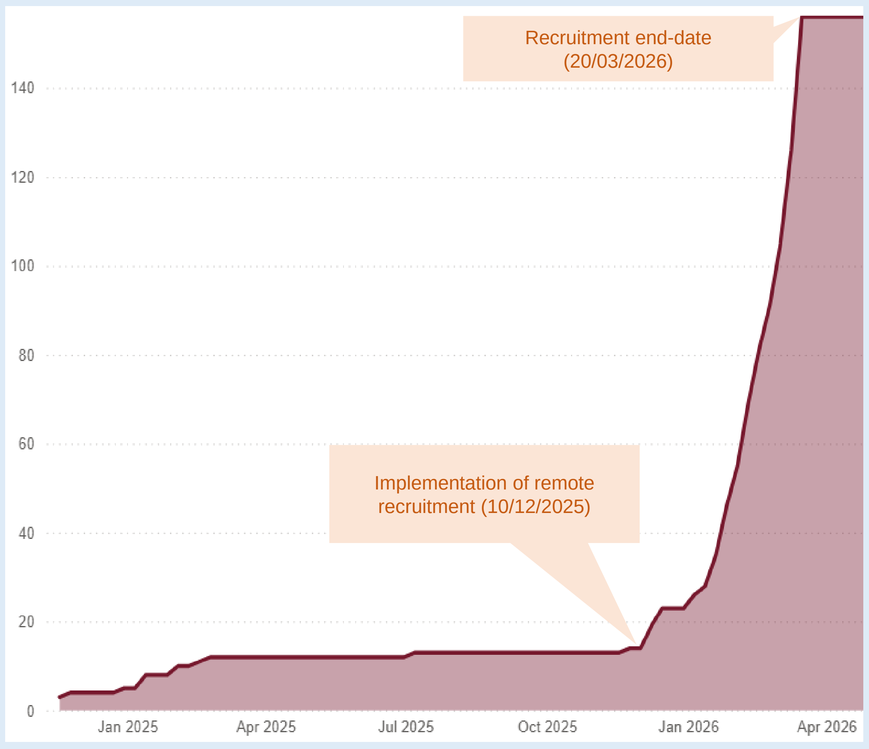
Background

- **ECRAID-Prime** is a community-based clinical trial, taking place in 8 European countries, assessing nasal spray treatments aimed at helping people with cold or flu-like symptoms recover faster, with reduced complications
- **Participants** are required to start trial treatment within 3 days of symptom-onset – this was a major barrier to recruitment because patients rarely present to their GP this early in the course of their illness
- **Therefore, in order to improve recruitment,** the central trial team implemented decentralised trial procedures in the UK, meaning that participants could be recruited remotely and take part in the trial entirely from home

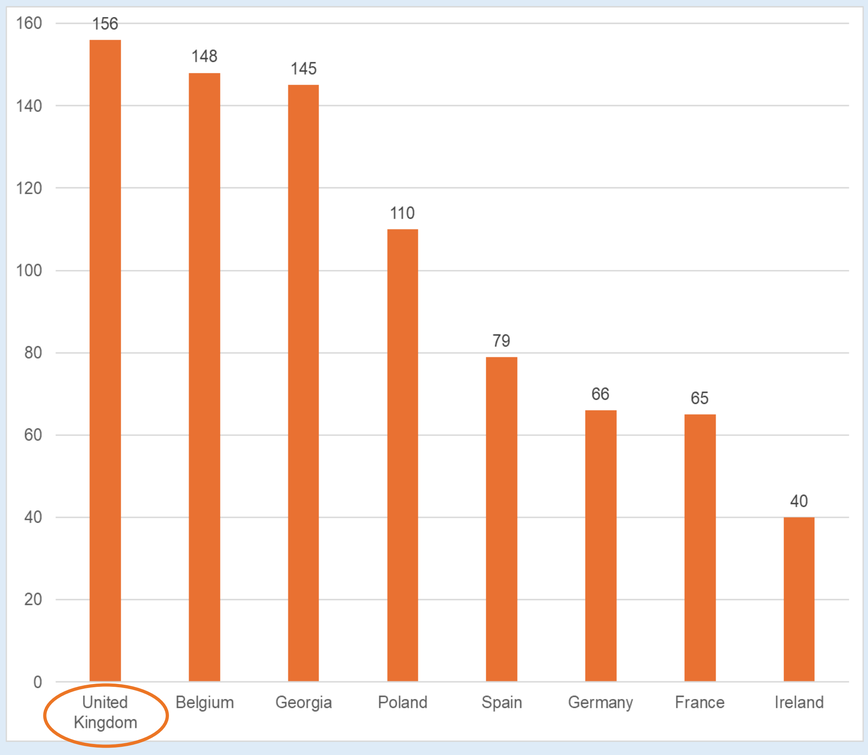
Methods

- **The planning and implementation** of the decentralised pathway involved an overhaul of most of the existing trial procedures, and deployment of innovative methods
- **The NIHR 'Be Part of Research' initiative** (a free online registry that helps match volunteers to suitable studies) was instrumental in publicising the trial to potential participants; the central trial team also used social media and physical posters to advertise the trial
- **Eligible participants** were enrolled via a telephone interview, including online informed consent (eConsent)
- **The trial medication and sampling kits** (for self-collected nose/throat swabs) were posted to the participant, enabling them to complete all trial procedures from home



Cumulative recruitment to the ECRAID-Prime trial

← Promotional poster



Per-country recruitment to the ECRAID-Prime trial

Results

- **The decentralised approach** enabled rapid recruitment to the ECRAID-Prime trial in a very short timeframe
- **A total of 111 remote participants** were recruited in the UK between December 2025 and March 2026, compared to 31 from UK GP surgeries in the same period
- **In total, the UK recruited 156 participants,** exceeding the per-country recruitment target and becoming the highest-recruiting country in the trial overall

Relevance and Impact

The decentralisation of the ECRAID-Prime trial demonstrates proof-of-concept and provides a model that can be adopted and adapted for future Ecraid trials and other community-based trials

Advantages of decentralised trials include:

- **Easing participant burden** – they can take part without leaving their homes (important in this trial due to the nature of the illness)
- **Enabling marginalised populations** to contribute to research
- **Easing trial management burden** and reducing resource allocation by having fewer recruiting teams – often only one central recruiting team is needed, which is easier to manage
- **Reducing trial set-up time** due to reduced need for site contracts
- **Reducing costs** by minimising site set-up fees and per-participant payments
- **Reducing the trial's carbon footprint** by minimising participant and staff travel and using digital technologies
- **Helping ensure pandemic-preparedness** by enabling community-based research to continue in the event of another pandemic

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