

## **Why I am a Clinical Research Coordinator**

**By Phalia McCorkle-Kester**

Research is my passion. I was always the little girl with pigtails asking, "Why?" and then asking again. I would pore through books searching for answers to endless questions. That is what drew me to the field of clinical research. Someday, I want to build on my research coordinator experience to ask my own research questions and lead my own research projects to answer them.

Now that I am a clinical research coordinator, I find comfort in knowing that the research I help conduct can give people better lives. As a person of color, I am sensitive to the racial history of clinical research, especially the Tuskegee study of untreated syphilis in African American males. Many people of color — especially African Americans — are afraid or simply do not have access to clinical trials. I offer them a friendly face they can trust to tell them the unvarnished truth. I help people of color participate in clinical trials to make sure new treatments work for them...and everyone else. Everyone is entitled to better medical treatments.

I once worried about finding a job in clinical research. I heard stories of promising research practices that shut down because the money ran out. As a wife and mother, it seemed like a gamble. But now, I believe that if my work is high quality, I will be able to find clinical research employment somewhere. That is a great comfort.

A lot of people wake up one day and find themselves in a research coordinator job. Coordinating research is too demanding to be just a job; it has to be calling. There has to be a passion for the work. There has to be a love of research or helping improve lives or creating order out of chaos — something more.

It is also important for me to work with people who share my commitment to clinical research. The reason they are so committed is not important, but it can't just be for the pay check. Physicians, clinics and hospitals that primarily see clinical research as a profitable business or marketing tool are missing the point and will not attract people with the necessary commitment. When there is an open position for a research coordinator and the work is piling up, it's easy to hire someone with all the necessary skills, but it's better to hire the person with passion. Skills can be acquired, but passion is innate and will be needed sooner or later.

Why am I in clinical research? Is it answering questions? Advancing public health? Helping minorities? Eventually becoming a research leader? Teaching others how to conduct clinical research? Working with people who share my values? I would have to say these are all reasons for me. At the end of the day it's about passion. I truly love what I do.

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