Modern Healthcare

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Walmart to recruit clinical trial participants, competing with CVS and Walgreens

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Walmart

Its Healthcare Research Institute is part of Walmart's expansion into the healthcare industry, with plans to engage underserved populations through its thousands of store locations.

Walmart said Tuesday it will begin helping pharmaceutical companies, clinical research organizations and academic medical centers recruit people for clinical research trials.

Its Walmart Healthcare Research Institute will focus on recruiting older adults, rural residents and minority populations for clinical trials and studies on treatments for chronic conditions.

The move puts Walmart in direct competition with Walgreens and CVS Health Group, both of which recently launched clinical trial units and are trying to engage with more diverse populations.

For months, the Food and Drug Administration has been focused on helping organizations enroll more clinical trial participants from underrepresented ethnic and racial populations as a way to improve drug research and patient health outcomes.

In 2020, 75% of drug trial participants in the U.S. were white, 11% were Hispanic, 8% were Black, and 6% were Asian, according to the FDA.

“We know our customers are interested in participating in healthcare research, but many have not had access until now,” Dr. John Wigneswaran, chief medical officer of Walmart, said in a news release.

Because 90% of Americans live within 10 miles of a Walmart, and nearly 4,000 stores are located in underserved areas, Wigneswaran said the retailer hopes to connect with customers and patients closer to the spaces where they live and work.

While Walmart has dabbled in the healthcare space for more than a decade, the company created Walmart Health in 2019, a division that offers primary and urgent care, labs, diagnostics, behavioral health, dental, optometry and hearing services. There are 32 Walmart Health centers across Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois and Texas, with six more opening in Florida.

The company also launched its own private brand of insulin last year.

In 2021, Walmart Health reported $42.84 billion in sales, which comprised nearly 11% of Walmart’s total revenue.

Walmart has entered the insurer space as well, partnering with healthcare startup Transcarent in 2021 to provide care access to employer groups, and announcing in September that it will offer preventive care services to UnitedHealth Group Medicare Advantage customers through a 10-year deal.

Inline Play

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