

Bodies for Hire

Contributed by Teccara Carmack and news reports - Black College Wire
Thursday, 13 December 2007

Students sign on as human lab rats

Study, study, study! When N.C. Central University students hear the word, their first thoughts may be history dates, mathematical equations or Science Odyssey homework.

However, the word now evokes a different thought: mean, green cash.

Many college students are becoming the subjects of research studies -- pharmaceutical clinical trials -- that bring in extra money.

As the semester progresses and refund money dwindles, students are looking for a way to make money while staying focused on school.

Participating in research studies can be lucrative and can come with many benefits.

"When I do a study," said business administration junior Christian Hart, "I am able to make money and get [my own] study time as well. We don't do anything but sit around and donate blood or get monitored."

Local clinical research companies, such as AAIPharma, target college campuses because they know that college students need quick cash and could use some free time for studying or catching up on class work.

In Wired magazine's April 2007 article "Drug Test Cowboys: The Secret World of Pharmaceutical Trial Subject," the author claimed subjects are earning up to \$80,000 a year participating in "the growing subculture of professional lab rats."

According to the Wired article, the trials can be dangerous: "In March 2006, eight male volunteers checked into London's Northwick Park Hospital for a weeklong study of TGN1412, an experimental treatment for rheumatoid arthritis and leukemia to be manufactured by Boehringer- Ingelheim. Within minutes of receiving the first dose, six of them began to writhe in pain, vomit, and lose consciousness, according to news reports. Nurses rushed them to the hospital's trauma unit, where doctors treated them for multiple organ failure. The test subjects lived, but all suffered permanent damage to their immune systems and internal organs. One lost fingers and toes. Another developed signs of cancer possibly triggered by the drug."

While studies are often similar, the payout varies. The type of study, the number of nights, if any, required for an overnight stay, and any health risks or side effects associated with your study determines the amount of money you will be paid. According to AAIPharma.com, a study patient can receive compensation ranging from \$600 to \$3,500.

"Following instructions is essential to getting your money," said criminal justice and biology senior LaShika Williams.

"If you don't follow the rules or you don't show up to certain appointments on time, you will not get paid the full amount."

Research studies also test the ability of the participants to listen and comprehend instructions. Any mistake participants make will be reflected in their compensation and may result in their being barred from further studies with that company.

Though research studies are a great way for college students to generate income in a time of need, there are also risks associated with participation in such studies.

For example, many studies require participants to donate blood and other bodily fluid essential to everyday functioning of the body. Those who participate in studies that require large amounts of blood to be drawn may become lightheaded, dizzy, weak or unable to drive.

The research companies stress that participants must read study requirements before they agree to do the study. This reduces the company's liability and ensures that participants understand the possible consequences of ingesting a drug or substance that has not yet been put on the market.

postCount('lab_rats');

Teccara Carmack wrote a version of this article for the North Carolina Central University student newspaper, the Campus Echo.

Posted Dec. 14, 2007