



10 November 2016

Memorandum

To: Trialists

Fr: Curtis Meinert

Re: Endpoint versus outcome?

You are doing a trial. What term do you use for the observation variables used to assess treatments in the trial? Do you call them endpoints or outcomes?

I hope you opt for outcome rather than endpoint for reasons outlined below in a usage note for endpoint modified from my dictionary (Clinical Trials Dictionary: Terminology and usage recommendation; Wiley; 2012).

Usage note: Best avoided because of misuse and potential for confusion. Use outcome, outcome measure, or event. Most “endpoints” noted over the course of followup in trials are not indicators of “end” in regard to treatment or followup. Most protocols call for followup, and often treatment as well, over a defined period of time even in the presence of and following intercurrent events. As a rule, there are no endpoints in this operational sense of usage, except death. Use of the term in protocols and manuals for trials can cause personnel at clinics to stop treatment and followup on the occurrence of an “endpoint” (morbid event) if they mistakenly regard the term as having operational meaning.