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Memorandum

To: Trialists

Fr: Curtis Meinert

Re: A plea to journal editors

The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) issued an edict in 2004 that journals represented by signatories to the edict *will require, as a condition of consideration for publication, registration in a public trials registry. Trials must register at or before the onset of patient enrollment. This policy applies to any clinical trial starting enrollment after July 1, 2005. (JAMA 2004; 292:1,363-64)*

The policy specified that editors publish registration numbers as the last entry in abstracts of papers published.

Technically, the edict applied only to the journals represented by the signatories to the edict, but the ICMJE website lists 5,000 medical journals that have signed onto ICMJE policies, including the policy of publishing registration numbers in abstracts of papers reporting results of trials.

Table 1 gives numbers of publications indexed in PubMed as randomized controlled trials [RZT] and number containing registration numbers. As seen, even for the last year covered, 2017, less than 25% of the publications had registration numbers indexed, meaning either that most trials are still not registered (unlikely given pressures to register and penalties for not registering) or, more likely, that editors do not publish registration numbers.

Table 1
Trials indexed in PubMed as [RZT] (Col A), trials indexed as registered (any SI no.; Col B), and number indexed as registered in ClinicalTrials.gov (Col D)

Year published	A Indexed [RZT]	B Registered (any SI no.)	C % any SI no. (B/A)%	D Registered <u>ClinicalTrials.gov</u>	E % <u>CT.gov</u> (D/A)%
2006	16,483	437	3%	310	2%
2007	18,134	994	5%	758	4%
2008	18,650	1,734	9%	1,372	7%
2009	19,689	2,381	12%	1,944	10%
2010	21,644	3,230	15%	2,691	12%
2011	24,448	4,114	17%	3,429	14%
2012	26,564	4,643	17%	4,007	15%
2013	28,854	5,752	20%	4,841	17%

Year published	A Indexed [RZT]	B Registered (any SI no.)	C % any SI no. (B/A)%	D Registered <u>ClinicalTrials.gov</u>	E % <u>CT.gov</u> (D/A)%
2014	29,262	7,002	24%	5,481	19%
2015	28,932	7,910	27%	5,968	21%
2016	27,745	6,785	24%	5,332	19%
2017	23,839	5,600	23%	4,745	20%
Sum	284,244	50,582	18%	40,878	14%

Table 2
Journals with most 2016 publications indexed in PubMed to [RZT] and numbers published with and without registration numbers indexed in PubMed

	Journal	Total	No. with registration no.	No. without registration no.
1	Trials	475	465	10
2	PLOS One	410	171	239
3	BMJ Open	285	235	50
4	Medicine (Baltimore)	187	19	168
5	Contemp Clin Trials	148	50	98
6	BMC Pub Health	135	113	22
7	NEJM	134	133	1
8	Am J Clin Nur	127	111	16
9	Lancet	123	109	14
10	Int J Cardiol	117	13	104
		2,141	1,419	722

The four journals with the largest number of [RZT] publications absent indexed registration numbers are:

PLOS One.....	239
Medicine (Baltimore).....	168
Int J Cardiol.	104
Contemp Clin Trials.....	98