



20 January 2016

Memorandum

To: Trialists

Fr: Curtis Meinert

Re: On the meaning of transparency

Transparency in Macmillan's Dictionary (3rd definition) is *an honest way of doing things that allows other people to know exactly what you are doing.*

In large measure the term means whatever the user intends it to mean, like Humpty Dumpty in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* "When I use a word it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less".

Irritation for me is the vacuous nature of the term. Transparency in trials is like motherhood, obviously good, but trials, by their very nature are arcane and obscure. So to expect transparency (whatever it means) is wishful thinking, even with such documents as SPIRIT and CONSORT.

The majority of pleas for "transparency" are in relation to access to study data. It is puzzling how little attention is on publication – the first requirement for transparency.

The concern is that the push for posting results within one year of completion of a trial and providing access to study data before they have been fully processed and digested by the people who produce them will suck the life out of publication.

It takes on average three years from finish to publication. That being so why bother with rejections and reviewers comments with publication? Just deposit the data and let others do the analysis and publish, allowing me to move on to do another trial for others to analyze.

How do you like them apples?