



18 February 2016

## Memorandum

To: Trialists

Fr: Curtis Meinert

Re: Trouble in River City

River City is a mythical town in Iowa serving as the setting for *Music Man*.

*Music Man* is about a con man, Harold Hill, posing as a band organizer and leader who comes to town selling musical instruments and band uniforms with the promise of music lessons and a marching band for the town. But Harold Hill is no musician and plans to skip town sans music lessons and marching band.

The analogy is to trialists who come to town promising people they will be contributing to science and knowledge and then leaving town without any effort to publish the results of the trial.

According to my memos of 7 January 2016 and 3 February 2016 there are lots of Harold Hills.

As researchers we depend on those who come before us. The trial we propose is supported by publications before us. When we fail to publish we have broken the chain and failed those who come after us.

Being able to research upon human beings is a public trust. The commitment to those studied is publication of results in the world's scientific literature. That commitment is not satisfied by posting results on [ClinicalTrials.gov](http://ClinicalTrials.gov) or by data sharing.

If study participants give their time and body, the least they should expect in return is a publication from the people doing the trial telling them what they found and before others are allowed to use their data.

The obligation to publish is paramount for trials supported by tax payers. Failure to publish erodes public trust and makes it difficult to sustain a public willing to fund trials.

Most of the demands for transparency focus on access to study data. The transparentologists would be well advised to focus their demands on the first requirement for transparency – publication by the investigators who do the research.