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Memorandum

To: Trialists

Fr: Curtis Meinert

Re: Reality check

When you get to be my age you know time is passing you by.

I have a flip phone, not being smart enough for a "smart" phone.

I still have a land line, mostly for junk calls. I pick up and hang up to stop the ringing. Sometimes, if the caller ID looks legitimate, I answer but if there is "dead air" I hang up.

I have a granddaughter whose primary mode of communication is texting. Try that on a flip phone. I never progressed beyond two finger typing. Now, with texting, it is two thumb typing. Progress?

So you have a paper to review. Do you review from your computer or print and then review? And if you print is it two-sided or one-sided? (Note: The default on most printers is two-sided print. You will have to change that if you are a one-sided print person – and perhaps waste a fair amount of paper before you figure out how to make one-sided print the default.)

Steve Piantadosi and I are editors of a large collective work entitled Principles and Practice of Clinical Trials to be published electronically by Springer Publishing, so we do lots of reviews.

Being a reasonable man (like Professor Henry Higgins in My Fair Lady), all I want is a printout I can read with my aging eyes, a printout that is page numbered and that has headers on every page that tell me where I am in the paper.

Is that too much to ask?

Page numbering, essential in any multi-page document. Basic in manuscripts, but all I can say from my reviews is that there are lots of people who have not heard of the page numbering feature of word processors.

I will take page numbers anywhere. Top, bottom, centered, or flushed right, but being a reasonable man I want them top, flushed right, not bottom, head bobbing ping pong style.

Since reviews are Brownian, I want print outs that have headers on every page so there are no blind entries. Situations where you have to back-page to figure out where you are, sort of like driving off the GPS grid in upper Michigan and having to backtrack to figure out where you are.

Am I being unreasonable?