

Lost to followup

"Lost to followup" is a misused and abused term in trials. It is used to mean anything from something as trivial as failing to have recorded the value for a particular variable at a scheduled visit to something as serious as having lost all contact with a study participant. The term is uninformative as a label in the absence of detail indicating the nature or extent of "loss". There are varying degrees of loss depending on circumstance.

Perhaps the most common usage is as a synonym for "missed visit" (with a person missing a scheduled visit being referred to as "lost to followup"). Indeed, such a person can be regarded as "lost to followup" for things that were to have been collected and recorded for that visit, but the loss is temporary, assuming the person returns for the next scheduled visit. Ideally, the term is best reserved for situations in which persons are truly lost; where they cannot be located and, hence, where one does not even know if they are alive or dead.

lost to followup *n* - 1. A person who cannot be found for **followup**. 2. An **observation unit** in a **followup study** that cannot be followed for some **outcome** or observation of interest. 3. A person considered unsuitable for followup because of some intervening condition or state, eg, in a **trial**, because the person is not receiving or taking the **assigned treatment**. rt: **losses to followup** *Usage note*: Generally, best avoided in the sense of defn 3; especially in trials where the intent is to maintain followup regardless of treatment status. Typically, the characterization is applied to a person who is unwilling or unable to return to a **study clinic** for **followup examinations**, but such uses are best avoided because they imply that missing clinic visits is tantamount to being lost to followup. That is true for data that cannot be collected in any other way, but it is not true for data that can be collected by other means, eg, by telephone contact with the person. In good usage, the observation or set of observations lost is specified. Do not use interchangeably with **dropout** or **drop out**. Even persons who refuse contact with study personnel can be followed for death.

lost to mortality followup *adj* - Characterized by **vital status** that cannot be determined because that person cannot be located or traced.

Dictionary entries with lost, lose, or loss as a base or modifier term

lose, lost, losing, losses *v*

lost *adj*

lost to followup *n*

lost to mortality followup *adj*

loss *n*

loss to followup *n*

losses to followup *n*