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11 October 2018

**Memorandum**

To: Trialists

Fr: Curtis Meinert

Re: On the meaning of negative in regard to results from trials

I wish pundits of trials would stop characterizing results of trials as positive or negative, for example as in the recent article in the New York Times entitled “*Congratulations. Your Study Went Nowhere*” (24 September 2018).

A positive result is one that is consistent with the hypothesis underlying the trial. It is a result indicative of benefit from the treatment. Trials are done with the expectation of producing positive results. That is why we do them.

A positive result is a positive result, but a negative result can be one that is opposite to what was expected, i.e., indicative of harm, or is a nil uninformative result; i.e., indicative of neither benefit or harm. Grouping the two types of results does a disservice to the field and science of trials.

A negative result, opposite in the direction expected is every bit as important as a positive result and every bit as likely to be published as a positive result. The problem in publication alluded to in the article is with the trials producing nil results, indicative of neither benefit or harm.

Pundits. Please stop using such wide brushes!