Time window

The schedules for data collection in trials are idealized. The actual schedules will vary around the idealized schedule. Designers of trials have to set allowable limits for the variation. That limits are necessary is obvious. Personnel at clinics will need rules for deciding when they can start seeing patients in relation to a specified visit. People responsible for performance monitoring or for analysis of study data will need rules for counting visits as completed or missed.

The usual approach to dealing with the variation is to construct time windows about the idealized time points. The normal method of construction is to center the window on the idealized time of the visit and to make it of such width so as to be contiguous with the preceding and following windows. For example, if followup visits are to be at 4 week intervals following randomization, then the maximum allowable interval is 4 weeks, with windows centered at week 4, week 8, etc. The window for the first followup visit opens at the start of week 3 and closes at the end of week 6. The window for the 2nd followup visit opens at the start of week 7 and closes at the end of week 10, etc.

The advantage of contiguous time windows is elimination of "dark periods". For example, suppose a person clinic staff has been trying to get back for followup visits who finally shows but in a windowless period. What to do? Send the person home without any data collection? That would be the situation if window construction was not contiguous, but with contiguous windows personnel would proceed to collect data required for the visit period with the open window.

A difficulty with contiguous time windows is that it is possible to perform followup visits for two time periods on adjoining days. The solution to preclude such possibilities is to impose minimum requirements for time separation of visits. The minimum has the effect of causing a window to remain closed until a specified time has passed following completion of the visit in the preceding time interval. Generally, minimum separations are required for baseline visits schedules where persons must be seen on two or more occasions before enrollment.

Illustration

Baseline

Period: 4 to 12 weeks
Visits: 5 (S1, S2, S3, S4, Rz)
Maximum allowable time separation between S1 and Rz: 12 weeks Randomization
Minimum time separation between S1 and Rz: 4 weeks

Followup

Period: 5 years or more
Zero point: Day of randomization
Visits: 2, 4, 8, and 12 months following randomization; thereafter every 4 months (f2, f4, f8, f12, f16, f20, etc)
Time window construction: Contiguous, centered on ideal date for designated followup visit (calculation based on day of randomization); symmetrical on ideal date
Minimal allowable separation between adjoining completed visits: 60 days

For more see Missed contact/missed visit.

time window *n* - The **time interval** for performing a specified activity or procedure. In **trials** and other **followup studies**, usually the **window** for performing a specified **examination** or type of **data collection**, such as for a **baseline** or **followup visit**. rt: **contiguous time window**, **disjoint time window**, **ideal time window**, **overlapping time window**, **permissible time window**, **time interval**, **time measure**, **time period**, **time point** ***Usage note***: See **time measure**.

contiguous time window *n* - A **time window** constructed to adjoin but not overlap the preceding or following time window. rt: **disjoint time window**, **ideal time window**, **overlapping time window**, **permissible time window**, **time window**

disjoint time window *n* - A **time window** neither adjoining or overlapping a preceding or following time window. rt: **contiguous time window**, **ideal time window**, **overlapping time window**, **permissible time window**, **time window**

ideal time window *n* - A **time interval** in a **permissible time window** within which an activity or procedure is ideally performed, eg, a 14 day interval centered at the **ideal visit time** within a permissible time window of 56 days similarly centered. rt: **permissible time window**

overlapping time window *n* - A **time window** overlapping the preceding or following time window. rt: **contiguous time window**, **disjoint time window**, **ideal time window**, **permissible time window**, **time window**

permissible time window *n* - The allowable **time interval** for performing a specified activity or procedure; usually centered at the **ideal visit time** and usually **contiguous** to adjacent time windows for **visit schedules**; **time window** in the absence of **ideal time window**. rt: **ideal time window**

Dictionary entries with time window as a base or modifier term
allowable time window *n*
contiguous time window *n*
disjoint time window *n*
ideal time window *n*
overlapping time window *n*
permissible time window *n*
time window *n*

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