



Center for Clinical Trials

Department of Biostatistics  
Department of Epidemiology  
Department of International Health

Department of Medicine  
Department of Ophthalmology  
Oncology Center

Wednesday, 30 November 2005

Memorandum

**To:** Center for Clinical Trials Students, Staff, and Faculty  
**Fr:** Curtis Meinert  
**Re:** Tables 101: The mechanics of production

God knows I cannot type. People laugh when they watch me type. It is the classic two finger method.

I lived quite well in my typing-challenged state until I brought an elephant into my living room. First, it was content largely to sit collecting dust in a neat little corner but eventually it took over my life and my house.

I warmed to the elephant slowly learning eventually that it had some useful features (like spell checking – another area of "challenge"). So I learned to live with the mess it created and its tendency to take over the house.

Up to the elephant, I was a paper and pen guy (pen, not pencil, because I hate the feel of pencil on paper – like scratching a fingernail on a blackboard). My initial abortive attempt at writing a book on clinical trials in the early 70s was via paper and pen. I could not think without paper and pen. Now (damn it), I cannot think without a keyboard and screen.

I am wedded to the elephant but only at the office and at home. The elephant does not travel.

Early on I tried a Toshiba Laptop. I thought it would be useful in my easy chair (but I learned that easy chairs are for sleeping). I even took it on a flight or two but it paralyzed my legs in "sardine" (more aptly named "Rocktop" than "Laptop"). I ditched it and never looked back.

Typing skill are located on some gene (still to be discovered), so once typing-challenged always typing-challenged. Mine remains the two finger method and this, in spite of *Typing Tutor*. (For reasons, still a mystery to me, the Center ended up with 100s of copies of *Typing Tutor*, purchased by Jim Tonasica before we had the Center Watch tradition. I mention the tradition because, had it existed, he would surely have been the hands down "winner" the year of the purchase!)

When you are typing-challenged everyone tries to "help". Piantadosi, seeing my sorry plight, extolled the virtues of Dragon Speaking to translate my words straightaway into written text. (A recommendation that earned him honorable mention for the Center Watch a few years back.) As it turns out, I was not able to teach it my Sleepy Eye dialect – just ask Watson! For weeks she heard me talking to the Dragon!

So why am I telling you these things? To remind you that when it comes to making tables or writing manuscripts the creator is the best typist, even with speeds as sorry as mine.

Remember the tortoise and the hare. You know how that race came out. Speed is not essential or even a virtue when it comes to creation.

Even a person as challenged as me, finds it more efficient, and in the end faster, to do his own typing and in dealing with "edits" and "iterations". No "handoffs".

There is no one better qualified than the author to make changes and in deciding on changes to be made (and those to be forgotten). Overall, the likelihood is that there will be more iterations with the "handoff" method than with the "do it yourself" approach and, in all probability, fewer errors to boot (and with no one to blame but yourself).

So get with it!

(Sat 10:22am) 08 Oct 05

VTables.101\Typing.WPD

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