



EDITORIALS AND COMMENTARIES

Transparent Reporting of Evaluations with Nonrandomized Designs (TREND)

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As the volume of intervention studies in fields of medicine, behavioral or social science, or education is consistently expanding, research synthesis is becoming an important tool for integrating the diverse findings of intervention trials and providing evidence-based recommendations to practitioners, policymakers, and the public to guide best practices and policies. Transparent reporting of intervention trials is important for research synthesis as it facilitates a more accurate critical appraisal and interpretation of the findings. Guidelines for transparent reporting are needed to highlight the key elements necessary for evaluating the validity and strength of effects from intervention trials. The Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT) statement has been developed and widely adopted to help guide summarizations of randomized controlled trials. However, behavioral and social interventions, key to such areas as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) prevention, do not always lend themselves to the format of randomized controlled trials. A parallel set of guidelines for nonrandomized controlled trials would address this need.

Recent efforts at research synthesis of HIV interventions led by the Prevention Research Synthesis team at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention highlighted the variability of information included in reports of nonrandomized controlled trials, with the net effect that a substantial proportion of studies contained inadequately reported information. To address this reporting gap, the Prevention Research Synthesis team convened a meeting of journal editors and HIV researchers on July 24 and 25, 2003, in Atlanta, Georgia, to evolve a set of guidelines intended to facilitate improved reporting of nonrandomized intervention studies (or nonrandomized controlled trials).

This effort resulted in the recently released Transparent Reporting of Evaluations with Nonrandomized Designs (TREND) statement published in the March 2004 issue of the *American Journal of Public Health*. The TREND statement provides background on the needs and the process of developing standardized reporting for nonrandomized controlled trials and includes a 22-item checklist of elements critical for describing the methods and results of these trials. The TREND statement should be considered an evolving document as it will be periodically revised as needed. The TREND group welcomes comments and feedback, and more information can be found at www.TREND-statement.org (available March 2004).

Many journals have expressed support for these guidelines (www.TREND-statement.org). This journal and others (*Addiction* and *AIDS Education and Prevention* as of January 2004) also plan to include the TREND statement as guidance in the journal instructions to authors and reviewers. Although the intention is to

improve reporting for the critical review of intervention studies as well as for facilitating research synthesis, editorial judgment needs to be exercised in accommodating this direction. These should not be absolute requirements for publication decisions because not all criteria for reporting are equally important, and different dimensions must be balanced for editorial decisions. However, efforts to improve the quality of data reporting can further the ability to summarize a body of scientific information comprehensively and provide appropriate evidence-based recommendations.