

Frequently Asked Questions

Questions about Clinical Trials Registration

Do trials that began before July 1, 2005 need to be enrolled before September 13, 2005 in order to be eligible for consideration at an ICMJE journal?

Trials that began before July 1, 2005:

Investigators should register trials that began enrolling patients any time before July 1, 2005 as soon as possible if they wish to submit them to a journal that follows the ICMJE policy. While the ICMJE hoped that all such trials would be registered by September 13, 2005, the committee understands that the policy statement was not entirely clear. Thus, ICMJE journals will consider trials that began before July 1, 2005 that were not registered prior to September 13, 2005. However, beginning on September 13, 2005, ICMJE journals will consider such trials only if they were adequately registered before journal submission. The ICMJE journals will accept "retrospective registration" of trials that began before July 1, 2005 (retrospective meaning registration occurs after patient enrollment begins).

Trials that began after July 1, 2005:

ICMJE journals will consider trials beginning on or after July 1, 2005 only if registration occurred before the first patient was enrolled ("prospective registration").

What is the ICMJE definition of an "ongoing" trial?

The ICMJE considers trials that began enrollment before July 1, 2005 to be "ongoing" if the investigators were still collecting, cleaning, or analyzing data as of July 1, 2005. Ongoing trials require registration before submission to a journal.

What is the ICMJE definition of a clinical trial?

The most recent editorial on trials registration at www.icmje.org discusses the evolution of the ICMJE definition of clinical trials. In June 2007 the ICMJE adopted the WHO's definition of clinical trial: "any research study that prospectively assigns human participants or groups of humans to one or more health-related interventions to evaluate the effects on health outcomes." Health-related interventions include any intervention used to modify a biomedical or health-related outcome (for example, drugs, surgical procedures, devices, behavioral treatments, dietary interventions, and process-of-care changes). Health outcomes include any biomedical or health-related measures obtained in patients or participants, including pharmacokinetic measures and adverse events. Purely observational studies (those in which the assignment of the medical intervention is not at the discretion of the investigator) will not require registration. The ICMJE member journals will start to implement the expanded definition of clinically directive trials for all trials that begin enrollment on or after 1 July 2008. Those who are uncertain whether their trial meets the expanded ICMJE definition should err on the side of registration if they wish to seek publication in an ICMJE journal. The ICMJE secretariat office is unable to review specific studies to determine whether registration is necessary. If researchers or others have questions about the need to register a specific study, they should err on the side of registration or consult the editorial office of the journal they wish to publish the study in.

What is the relationship between the ICMJE trials registration policy and the ongoing WHO trials registry effort?

In September 2005, the ICMJE implemented a policy that requires registration of clinically directive trials. The WHO is also working towards the implementation of an international trials registration process. Although several editors of ICMJE journals are independently involved as advisors to the WHO process, the two efforts are separate. The ICMJE welcomes the WHO initiative and is following its progress closely. When the final WHO policy is available, the ICMJE will determine whether to revise the ICMJE requirements to correspond to the WHO requirements. At present, the ICMJE expects investigators who wish to publish in ICMJE journals to adhere to the current ICMJE trials registry policy as documented on this web site (see May 2005 editorial and Frequently Asked Questions for details of the current ICMJE policy including the definition of applicable trials, acceptable registries, timing of registration, and required data items).

Which trials registries are acceptable to the ICMJE?

The ICMJE accepts registration in the following registries:

www.actr.org.au

www.clinicaltrials.gov

www.ISRCTN.org

www.umin.ac.jp/ctr/index/htm

www.trialregister.nl

In addition to the above registries, starting in June 2007 the ICMJE will also accept registration in any of the primary registries that participate in the WHO International Clinical Trials Portal (see <http://www.who.int/ictpr/about/details/en/index.html>). Because it is critical that trial registries are independent of for-profit interests, the ICMJE policy requires registration in a WHO primary registry rather than solely in an associate registry, since for-profit entities manage some associate registries. Trial registration with missing or uninformative fields for the minimum data elements is inadequate even if the registration is in an acceptable registry.

What should trial registries that wish to be ICMJE-acceptable registries do?

The ICMJE is no longer the entity that reviews registries for acceptability. Registries should consult the WHO International Clinical Trials Registry Platform. Registries that the WHO designates as primary registries will be acceptable to the ICMJE.

Where can I get information about how to register a trial?

Please refer to the registry that you choose to register in for instructions about the registration process for that specific registry.

I'm having trouble registering my trial in ClinicalTrials.gov or believe that my trial is not eligible for registration in that registry... What now?

Send an email to register@clinicaltrials.gov with your question or explaining the problems you are encountering.

Are clinical trials registries in languages other than English acceptable to meet the ICMJE's trials registration policy?

The ICMJE is cooperating with the WHO effort and will adopt WHO policy with respect to registry language. However, until the WHO has a mechanism in place to solve the problems of searching across registries in different languages, the ICMJE feels that the minimal data items need to be registered in English as well as in the native language of the registry.

Do I need to register a trial if the subjects were health care providers and not patients?

Some trials assign health care providers, rather than patients, to intervention and comparison/control groups. If the purpose of the trial is to examine the effect of the provider intervention on the health outcomes of the providers' patients, then investigators should register the trial. If the purpose is to examine the effect only on the providers (for example, provider knowledge or attitudes), then registration is not necessary.

Questions about ICMJE Membership

How can I join the ICMJE?

The ICMJE (previously known as the Vancouver Group) is not an open membership organization. It is a small working group of general medical journals. Occasionally, the ICMJE will invite a new member or guest when the committee feels that the new journal or organization will provide a needed perspective that is not already available within the existing committee. Open membership organizations for editors and others in biomedical publication include the World Association of Medical Editors www.WAME.org and the Council of Science Editors www.councilofscienceeditors. However, if your journal follows the ICMJE's Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals and you would like the ICMJE to include it on the list of journals that follow ICMJE policy on www.ICMJE.org, just send an e-mail stating that request. If you include the URL for your journal's web site, we can post a link from www.ICMJE.org to your journal.

Which journals are members of the ICMJE?

Annals of Internal Medicine, British Medical Journal, Canadian Medical Association Journal, Croatian Medical Journal, JAMA, Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde, New England Journal of Medicine, New Zealand Medical Journal, The Lancet, The Medical Journal of Australia, Tidsskrift for Den Norske Llegeforening, and Ugeskrift for Laeger are the member journals. However, a large number of non-member journals reports that they follow the ICMJE's Uniform Requirements for manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals.

Questions about the Uniform Requirements

For Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals

How do I obtain a print copy of the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals (URMs)?

The ICMJE does not publish print copies of the current Uniform Requirements. The official and most current document is freely available to the public at on the ICMJE web site. Interested users can print a PDF version of this document from www.ICMJE.org.

Can I translate/reprint the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals (URMs)?

The ICMJE welcomes organizations to reprint/translate the URMs into languages other than English for non-profit purposes. However, the ICMJE does not have the resources to translate, to back translate, or to review or approve reprinted/translated versions of the document. Thus, any reprints/translations should prominently include the following statement:

"This is a (insert language name) language translation/reprint of the ICMJE Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals. (insert name of organization) prepared this reprint/translation with support from (insert name of funding source, if any). The ICMJE has not endorsed nor approved the contents of this reprint/translation. The official version of the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals is located at www.ICMJE.org. Users should cite this official version when citing the document."

The ICMJE asks that anyone who reprints/translates the Uniform Requirements notify the ICMJE of that reprint/translation by sending an e-mail to the ICMJE secretariat office: claine@acponline.org

How do I cite the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals?

International Committee of Medical Journal Editors [homepage on the Internet]. Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Writing and Editing for Biomedical Publication [insert month/day/year you accessed site] Available from: <http://www.ICMJE.org> .

Which journals follow the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals (URMs)?

There are only 12 journals that are official members of the ICMJE: *Annals of Internal Medicine*, *British Medical Journal*, *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, *Croatian Medical Journal*, *JAMA*, *Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde*, *New England Journal of Medicine*, *New Zealand Medical Journal*, *The Lancet*, *The Medical Journal of Australia*, *Tidsskrift for Den Norske Llegeforening*, and *Ugeskrift for Laeger*.

However, a large number of journals follow the URMs. A list of journals that have contacted the ICMJE to request listing as a publication that follows the URMS is available at www.ICMJE.org. There may be journals that follow the URMs that do not appear on this list. Users should also be aware that individual publications and their editors may have individual interpretations of and implementation of URM recommendations. The ICMJE cannot verify how closely listed journals follow the many specific recommendations contained within the URMs. If authors have questions about a

particular journal to which they are considering submitting their work, they should consult the “Information for Authors” or the editorial office of that journal.

Questions about Other Issues

What is the contact information or how do I submit an article to a specific journal?

Individuals with specific questions about a specific journal must contact that journal directly. The ICMJE does not maintain a directory of journals. However, some journals have included their internet addresses when requesting posting on the ICMJE’s list of journals that follow the Uniform Requirements for manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals. However, if the internet address is not on the list, the ICMJE will not be able to provide you with this information. We suggest that you search for the journal of interest on the internet or consult the library at your institution.

How do I format a specific citation?

The ICMJE no longer publishes a list of reference formats, but instead recommends that authors follow the ANSI standard style adapted by the National Library of Medicine (NLM) for its databases. For samples of reference citation formats, authors should consult NLM’s Citing Medicine at www.nlm.nih.gov/citingmedicine/.