

LETTERS

WASTAGE IN CLINICAL TRIALS

Some clinical trials are driven by fashion, not science

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Ioannidis describes the waste in clinical trials.¹ Some trials—such as those on vitamin D supplementation—are driven by fashion rather than scientific merit. Despite negative results with various preparations, doses, and frequencies, trials continue to be conducted with different regimens.

Vitamin D supplements are presumed to be a panacea for all known adult chronic medical conditions, even though multiple meta-analyses have indicated otherwise. The US Preventive Services Task Force states that current evidence is insufficient to assess the balance of benefits and harms of screening for vitamin D deficiency in asymptomatic adults.² Furthermore, vitamin D supplements show no overall effect on cardiovascular disease, cancer, or mortality.³

Such practice puts patients at unnecessary risk (vitamin D induces calcification of vessel walls in mice), wasting time and money.

Despite this evidence, finances are still directed towards these trials owing to strong research personalities, vested interests, and a deep belief that one day the theory will be proved to be

true. However, studies conducted with a fresh different perspective may prove beneficial to patients as well as cost saving.⁴

This principle could be generalised to other trendy but futile clinical trials.

Competing interests: None declared.

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