Editors must also take some of the responsibility. There is a limit to the number of reports that we can publish, and we are sometimes forced to decline publication. Many investigators regret not having published their trial results, and almost all investigators when contacted about unreported data are delighted to provide it.

Because of the important consequences of unreported trials, the editors of nearly 100 international medical journals have joined together to call an unreported trial amnesty. Although amnesty means giving pardon, we hope that investigators will see this as an opportunity—namely, to make the results of previously unreported trials publicly accessible, thus having the potential to contribute to the scientific foundation of health care. We urge all investigators with unreported trial data to register their trial or trials by filling in and returning an unreported trial registration form (see Appendix). We would like to register any unreported controlled trial, including trials that have only been published in abstract form. Registration can be undertaken by anyone able to provide the registration information, even if they are unable to provide the actual trial data. We expect a degree of duplicate registration. Registration information can be posted or faxed to the editorial offices of this Journal. Alternatively, registration information can be sent by e-mail (meta@ucl.ac.uk). The information will be made available by listing the trial details on a Web site and in other ways, as appropriate. If specific trial data are required, for example, by those conducting systematic reviews, then the reviewer will be able to seek this information directly from the trialist. Some of the trials may be suitable for full publication, and the Journal will be happy to consider these.

Medical editors are acutely aware of the trials and tribulations of research reporting. But on this occasion, because of the serious implications of unreported research, we are endeavoring to cleave the trials from the tribulations. We cannot confidently estimate the total number of unreported trials, but we are confident of a good response.

References

Appendix

Unreported trial registration form

Register any controlled trial which has not been published in full, including trials that have only been published as an abstract. Registration can be undertaken by anyone able to provide the registration information, even if they are unable to provide the actual trial data. Please complete one form for each trial being registered.

Contact details

Surname: ____________________________  Forename(s): ____________________________

Postal address: ____________________________  Phone (with regional codes): ____________________________

Fax (with regional codes): ____________________________  E-mail: ____________________________

Trial details

Approximate number of participants in the trial: ____________________________

Type of participants (e.g. people with head injury, women at risk of breast cancer): ____________________________

Type of intervention (e.g. steroids versus placebo, annual mammography versus standard practice): ____________________________

versus

Please post or fax completed registration forms to:

Medical Editors Trial Amnesty
Journal of the American College of Cardiology
William W. Parmley, MD
415 Judah Street
San Francisco, CA 94122
Fax: 415-759-0251

Alternatively, the above information can be sent by E-mail to: meta@ucl.ac.uk