

Gerd Antes, Germany

Achieving Transparency for Clinical Trials - a multidimensional problem, far from being solved

Short bio

Gerd Antes is a Medical Statistician, an honorary professor at the Medical Center – University of Freiburg i.Br. (Germany) and the director of Cochrane Germany. He set up the German Cochrane Centre within the Institute of Medical Biometry and Medical Informatics at the University of Freiburg in 1997. In 2014 Cochrane Germany has been made a central institution within the Medical Center. Gerd Antes stimulated and supported the progress of evidence-based healthcare and the Cochrane Collaboration in Germany. For instance, he is a Co-founder and board member (2001-2003 also chair) of the German Network for evidence-based medicine. From 1998 to 2004 he was a member of the Cochrane Collaboration's Steering Group. Since November 2002 he is a member of the Guidelines Commission AWMF (German Association of Medical Scientific Societies). After several years on the Scientific Advisory Board of the International Clinical Trial Registry Platform (ICTRP) WHO, he became project coordinator of the German Registry for Clinical Trials (DRKS) in 2007. Additionally, he is a member of several advisory boards of national and international projects. In February 2012 he received a honorary professorship from the Medical Faculty of the University of Freiburg.

Lecture synopsis

The non-publication of clinical trials is one of the most serious sources of waste and distortion in the research process. The preference to publish positive results and suppress negative results leads to publication bias, well known since decades. The consequence is that systematic reviews and all following products like HTA reports, clinical guidelines and patient information texts are seriously biased towards overoptimistic views and recommendations.

Less well known than the disappearance of whole trials are changes during the trials and in the reporting (e. g. outcome switching) and systematic spin in the interpretation of trial results. They have received increased attention in recent years what led to term dissemination bias which is more generic than publication bias. In spite of many activities to reduce these systematic errors and malpractice the situation has not really improved as it should. The current situation and activities are described in context to stimulate the discussion how to join the efforts in favour of more transparency.