Why Is Randomization Needed in Clinical Trials?

Why is Randomization needed in Clinical Trials and what about Bias?

What is Randomization

Why is randomization really needed is a question the public and patients frequently ask. This is not the one we usually answer when we focus on what randomization does. We can answer better by showing why we need randomization. Jeremy Howick (2009). If Children Understand Drawing Straws and Flipping Coins, Research Participants Can Understand Randomization

How do Clinical trials and randomization work for a fair assessment of treatment? Below is an excellent short video from the ECRAN foundation
How Trials Work

Clinical Research from ECRAN project on Vimeo.

Mostly people I talk to don’t understand why they can’t just sign up for the intervention that works and they complain that really sick patients with complex problems can’t even get in a trial. In a recent conversation with MS advocates they shared not one in their group was ever admitted for a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) because they couldn’t meet the conditions due to the complexity or severity of the disease. None had ever gotten to the point where they were randomized! They say that when the interventions are finally approved dangerous interactions are sometimes found because the interventions are not tested on typical MS patients. The advocates point out that this also is a form of bias.

What is Bias

Wikipedia does a great explanation of biases and describes them. Dr. Terry Shaneyfelt takes this five minute video and explains the whys of randomization What do you think? Is pre-selection a form of bias?

Why Randomization Helps Reduce Bias

For more information see Clinical Trials Who Needs Them

ThinkWell wants to know how could RCT’s be more user friendly. What do you see as barriers to participation? What could be changed and why? We welcome your comments.