

adverse effects; systematic, critical assessments of drug packaging and the conditions under which drugs are used should be performed; and stricter requirements regarding the choice of comparators should be imposed.

It would then be up to public authorities to take more account of these high-quality opinions, and link the level of reimbursement and sales price of drugs to the therapeutic advance they truly represent.

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## FDA sanctions for misconduct in clinical trials; results published as if nothing were amiss

**D**rug regulatory agencies inspect the premises where clinical trials are conducted. Do journals that publish clinical trials take into account the findings from these inspections?

**Strictly controlled...** The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regularly inspects the premises where clinical trials are conducted for the purpose of obtaining FDA marketing approval. These inspections include verifying that investigators adhered to the planned protocol and that all patients had given informed consent (1).

When violations are identified, the FDA sometimes asks the company to rectify them or imposes sanctions (2% of the 644 inspections carried out in 2013). Sanctions are applied, for example, when false information is submitted or adverse effects are concealed; in such cases, the trial is excluded from the application for marketing approval (1).

**...but no impact on publication!** A recent study looked at whether trials on which the FDA had imposed sanc-

tions for misconduct had been published in scientific journals, and whether the articles mentioned the irregularities identified. Between 1998 and 2013, sanctions were imposed on about 600 trials, but because the information obtained from the FDA was often heavily redacted (in order to protect commercial or personal data), sufficient details on the irregularities were only available for 101 of these trials (1).

In the end, the analysis concerned 57 trials whose results had been published in a journal. According to the FDA, the investigators had falsified results or submitted false information in 22 trials (39%), and failed to report adverse effects in 14 trials (25%). Protocol violations were identified in 42 trials (74%), and failure to protect the safety, rights and welfare of patients was found in 30 trials (53%) (1).

These 57 trials resulted in publication of 78 articles and numerous citations (a). Only three publications (4%) mentioned the irregularities identified by the FDA (1).

The author of this study calls on the FDA to be more transparent in publishing the results of its inspections of clinical trial sites, in order to make it more difficult to publish invalid trial results (1). It remains up to journals to demand more guarantees concerning the integrity of the research submitted for publication and to improve the reliability of published data.

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*a- For example, the author describes the case of the Record 4 trial of rivaroxaban versus enoxaparin, in which irregularities were observed at 8 of the 16 sites (ref 1). According to our search in PubMed, conducted on 14 June 2015, the Lancet article in which the results of this trial were reported in 2009 has been cited in 6 systematic reviews and 86 articles indexed in Medline.*

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