

UK universities lack transparency on clinical trials

Many leading universities in the UK have received formal written warning that they must comply with current transparency rules and legislation regarding the publication of their research and clinical trial results.

This measure follows an investigative report on clinical trials transparency published by the House of Commons' Science and Technology Committee in October, 2018, which revealed several issues regarding the research integrity of UK institutions. The report highlighted a widespread failure of many institutions to publish clinical trials (around half of clinical trials are unreported), which creates serious research wastage, limiting the evidence base for clinical decision making and potentially jeopardising public health. Clinical trial registration is not universal in the UK and, when trial results are reported, they do not always match the study protocol.

Although some universities have responded to the problems identified in the report, many have not. As a result, Chairman of the Committee, Norman Lamb MP, has written a formal letter of warning to more than 40 UK universities, reminding them that they must strive to comply with existing transparency regulations as a matter of priority, and notifying them that if they do not, they might be investigated after the summer recess. His letter draws particular attention to the rules of the European Commission, which requires that all trials on the EU Clinical Trials Register post their results within 12 months of completion, and of the FDA Amendments Act 2007, which stipulates that the results of trials registered at ClinicalTrials.gov must be reported in the same timeframe, according to US law.

"It's deeply disappointing that on the face of it, most universities have

failed to respond to the clinical trials transparency problems we identified in October", commented Lamb. "Our Committee will be returning to this issue with a follow-up evidence session, so I'm putting all universities on notice that they will be asked to come before us to explain themselves if they haven't got their house in order by then."

"Politicians' firm stance on transparency of trials is welcome. Registration of a trial means visibility," said Tom Jefferson (University of Oxford, Oxford, UK). "However, the report fails to tackle the measure which could most enhance reporting: public availability of clinical study reports of trials, following the European Medicines Agency and some pharmaceutical companies. Other funders of trials should agree a similar standard of trial reporting and make the reports available."

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For more on the **lack of clinical trials transparency in UK universities** see <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/science-and-technology-committee/news-parliament-2017/clinical-trials-letters-chairs-comments-17-19/>