

Registering paediatric clinical trials

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There is widespread recognition that clinical trials need to be registered. The only paediatric clinical trials register is based in Europe (www.dec-net.org). The register has been successful with 270 paediatric clinical trials registered. The register has been freely accessible to both health professionals and the public. Unfortunately this small

paediatric clinical trials register cannot compete with the larger registers which are supported by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. The European Paediatric Clinical Trials Register (DEC-net) is therefore suspending registration of new trials.

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The need to register clinical trials is now accepted by health professionals, regulatory authorities, the pharmaceutical industry, the main medical journals' editors¹, and the World Health Organization². The European Paediatric Clinical Trials Register (DEC-net) was launched in July 2004³. The register has been freely available through the internet to both health professionals and the public (www.dec-net.org). Over the last two years 270 paediatric clinical trials from four countries (Italy, France, Spain and the UK), one third of which are multinational, have been entered onto this register. Although a relatively small number of trials in comparison to some of the larger registers dealing with adult clinical trials, this is a unique achievement.

DEC-net remains the only paediatric-oriented register of clinical trials (although this aspect caused it to be left out of the more powerful initiatives) and, with its multilingual characteristic, it could be considered more user-friendly for the general public than most international registers that only provide (often limited) information in English⁴.

DEC-net was created at the ideal moment, when the registration of clinical trials was becoming increasingly recognised as a priority in the scientific and lay communities, and was being followed closely by the media. During the project's three years, several, large initiatives with the same final goal of transparency of information

were set up or implemented. Given the power of a few of these developments, such as the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors' (ICMJE) initiative¹ and the consequent empowerment of a single, existing register, or the World Health Organization's register platform project, DEC-net's potential has been surpassed.

We regret to announce that we feel it is no longer appropriate to continue to register new trials. The DEC-net register will remain online and accessible to the public for a few more months, but the information will not be updated. Investigators will need to register new trials on an alternative clinical trials registry.

We are satisfied with the project's success and are reluctant to conclude such an accomplishment, however, we are also glad for the ongoing, powerful, worldwide movement towards trial registration and openness of information to the public and the scientific community, to which we feel DEC-net may also have contributed. We are

also confident that all the developments brought about in the last few years will lead to improved scientific testing and interpretation of its results, especially for children, through collaborative, network based approaches (as the DEC-net project attempted to do).

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