

The merits of measuring the quality of clinical trials: is it becoming a Byzantine discussion?

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Editor: I welcome the opportunity to respond to Dr Berger, particularly because it is the second article authored by him that I have seen this year, and the fourth overall, in which he criticizes the so-called 'Jadad Scale', or 'Jadad score', as he calls it (I was not responsible for the moniker).

Although it might appear surprising, I agree with most of what he has written. The 'Jadad Scale' has become a staple of systematic reviews, despite its narrow scope and the dearth of evidence of benefit beyond early studies that attributed to it the potential to identify distortion of effects by trials deemed to have low quality [1]. Whether this particular tool is better or worse than any of the other instruments available, however, is not clear to me.

This may not even be an issue at all. Just like 'beauty', quality (of trials, of information on the Internet, of care, of life) may ultimately be on the eye of the beholder [2]. As with many other constructs, including 'health' [3], it remains unclear whether the assessment of trial quality is necessary, possible or even beneficial.

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