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Aims
Clinical trials are needed more and more as a means of ascertaining whether those new treatments and preventive measures that are laboratory successes actually have a favourable impact on human health. The controlled trial gives us the opportunity to study not only immediate but also long-term effects on outcome. It also has the capacity to reveal subtle effects that are not qualitative, but merely quantitative, differences between treatment groups. One of the most important lessons that trials and other epidemiologic studies have taught us in recent years is that adverse effects of drugs and other treatments may not be responses unique to the drug under study but may instead manifest themselves as an increased incidence of a disorder that already occurs in the absence of treatment. Clinical trials pose a challenge to NIH because the number of significant questions that can be answered through clinical trials clearly exceeds our ability – indeed, the nation’s – to plan, execute, and finance all the studies that are needed (Welcoming remarks, page 630).

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