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The distinguishing characteristic of a controlled clinical trial is the quality of the planning which is done before any observations are made. The impact of a well-planned trial will depend to a great extent, however, on the quality of the report which is published; readers must be convinced that the work was worth doing, was well done, and that the findings are relevant to the clinical situations they might have to face. To this end the report should aim to present the final conclusions backed by the fullest evidence.

The introduction to the report should state clearly the question that the trial is intended to answer. This may require some review of the literature, which, however, need not be extensive unless it is necessary to show why previous reports are unacceptable, or what differences of opinion currently held are to be resolved by the present trial. This section must, however, discuss the choice of drug and the kind of illness which is to be treated.

As the controlled clinical trial stands or falls on its plan, the report must describe this in detail. It is important to give the diagnostic criteria employed, so that it is evident that the patients selected were homogeneous in respect of their illnesses, and so that it is obvious in what clinical conditions the results of the trial might later be applied. The recruitment of patients, whether for example from all admissions to the wards or out-patients which satisfy the diagnostic criteria, or from some special source, and the method of allocation to Treated and Control groups, require special attention on the report as this is the crucial stage in a trial. The therapeutic régime to be given to both groups must be stated, in particular whether the dose is to be fixed or left to the physician's discretion, together with the reasons for this decision. The results of many well-conducted trials have been criticized on the grounds that the dosage employed was inadequate or ill-adjusted to individual patients' requirements. The plan also includes the choice of clinical and laboratory tests used