

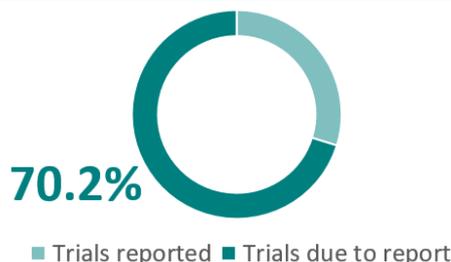
# Taking action against missing clinical trial results

By Nicola Clarke (Systematic Reviews Researcher)

A recent article released by the BMJ states that national medicines regulators have been urged by transparency campaigners to **reduce the number of clinical trials whose results have not been reported.**<sup>1</sup>

EU transparency rules: clinical trial results are to be made public **within 12 months** of study completion.<sup>1</sup> **But...**

Number of European drug trials with missing results according to the EU Trials Tracker<sup>2</sup>



**TranspariMED**  
An organisation working to end evidence distortion in medicine

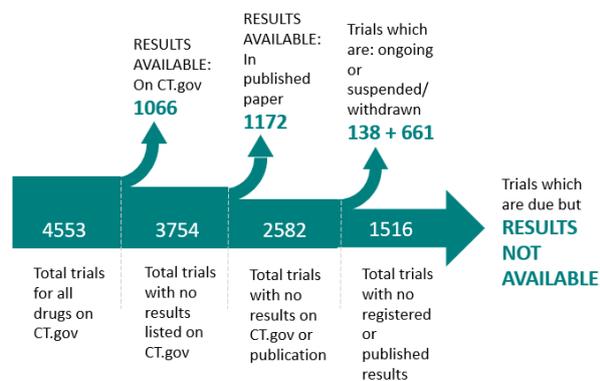
“Unpublished data creates **gaps** in the medical evidence base that have **potential to harm patients and public health** and can **slow the development** of new treatments, vaccines and cures.”<sup>1</sup>

Eighteen organisations signed an open letter on 6 May 2021 to heads of medicines agencies that highlights that **almost 30%** of the drug trials run in the European Union are **violating these rules** of transparency.<sup>1</sup>

## Missing clinical trial data: the evidence gap in primary data for potential COVID-19 drugs.<sup>3</sup>

Objective	❖ To review the <b>number of unpublished clinical trials</b> on repurposed <b>drugs for COVID-19</b> , which have been completed or terminated and whose results have not been reported
Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Rapid review conducted between 4 and 27 April 2020</li> <li>➤ ClinicalTrials.gov was searched for 19 drugs identified as potential treatments for COVID-19</li> <li>➤ Relevant clinical trials were recorded and checked for results and timely result reporting</li> <li>➤ PubMed and Google Scholar were searched to identify published results not listed on the registry</li> </ul>
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 3754 completed trials were identified.</li> <li>✓ Of these, <b>1516 (40.4%) failed to post results</b> on ClinicalTrials.gov or in the academic literature.</li> </ul>

### Registered trials segmented according to availability of trial results



### Our thoughts:

#### Why do trial results go unreported?

- Publication bias: trials with positive findings are published more often than those with negative findings.
- Publication cost: it takes time and resources for authors to develop and journals to approve a manuscript.

#### Why is it important to publish all results?

- To allow science to advance more quickly, avoid repetition of trials and wasted resources and inform decision-making around safety and efficacy of treatments.

#### Where can you publish/ find negative trial results?

- The Missing pieces: A collection of Negative, Null and Inconclusive Results PLOS ONE
- The Journal of Negative Results in BioMedicine;
- The BMJ runs a series called “unreported trial of the week”
- OpenTrials - a collaborative, open database for all available data and documents related to all clinical trials.

1. BMJ 2021;373:n1169 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n1169> Published: 06 May 2021  
 2. EU Trials Tracker. Who’s not sharing EU clinical trial results? <http://eu.trialstracker.net/?search>  
 3. Rodgers, F., Pepperrell, T., Keestra, S. *et al.* Missing clinical trial data: the evidence gap in primary data for potential COVID-19 drugs. *Trials* 22, 59 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13063-021-05024-y>