

**Editorial****Strengthening the foundation of oral health through clinical trial registration**Sarvraj Singh Kohli<sup>1\*</sup>, Virinder Singh Kohli<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>Dept. of Orthodontics, Hitkarini Dental College & Hospital, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, India<sup>2</sup>Dept. of Dental Sciences, Jabalpur Hospital & Research Centre, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, India**Received:** 05-01-2026; **Accepted** 02-02-2026; **Available Online:** 18-02-2026

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Randomized controlled trial (RCT) remain the gold standard for clinical investigation in healthcare sciences, so it naturally applies to dentistry as well. RCTs provide the critical evidence necessary to advance patient care and ensure therapeutic safety. However, the integrity of this evidence depends heavily on transparency and the mitigation of bias. Historically, the dental field has seen a slower adoption of clinical trial registration compared to other medical disciplines, with some assessments indicating that less than 25% of dental RCTs were registered in public databases.<sup>1</sup> As we move further into an era of evidence-based practice, the mandatory *a priori* registration of all clinical trials is no longer a luxury—it is an ethical and scientific necessity.

**2. The Scientific and Ethical Mandate**

Registration serves as a safeguard against two of the most pervasive threats to research integrity: publication bias and selective outcome reporting. By declaring study protocols, primary endpoints, and methodologies before the first patient is recruited, researchers provide a transparent "audit trail" that prevents the post-hoc manipulation of data to favour statistically significant results.<sup>2,3</sup>

The ethical implications are equally profound. Participants in dental research volunteer under the assumption that their contribution will advance collective knowledge. Failing to register or publish trials, particularly those with null or negative results, violates this unspoken

contract and leads to the unnecessary duplication of studies, effectively exposing future patients to redundant risks.<sup>4</sup>

**3. Global Standards and Accountability**

The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) established the global benchmark over two decades ago, requiring trial registration as a condition for publication.<sup>1,4</sup> Major dental publications, such as the Journal of Dental Research (JDR) and Brazilian Oral Research, have followed suit, mandating registration prior to study initiation.<sup>1,4</sup> Furthermore, regional registries like the Clinical Trials Registry–India (CTRI) have become vital infrastructure for ensuring that dental research—ranging from public health initiatives to specialized orthodontic trials—is accessible and accountable.<sup>2,3</sup> Adherence to reporting standards, such as the CONSORT (Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials) statement and the SPIRIT (Standard Protocol Items: Recommendations for Interventional Trials) guidelines, further reinforces this framework.<sup>1,5</sup> These tools ensure that the design, conduct, and analysis of a trial are described with enough clarity to allow for critical appraisal and replication.<sup>5</sup>

**4. A Call to Action**

While we have seen significant improvements in registration trends, we must strive for 100% compliance. It is the responsibility of investigators, academic mentors, and ethics committees to normalize registration as a standard first step in the research timeline. By ensuring every trial is registered, we protect the rights of our participants, enhance the

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credibility of our findings, and ultimately provide a more reliable foundation for the clinical decisions that impact our patients' lives.

## 5. Conflict of Interest

None.

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