

manage patients afterward (with lifestyle advice and oral therapy^{3,4}) is potentially huge.

The prospect of targeted screening (as supported by Lyon and associates) warrants consideration. Screening tools with different predictive abilities (75% to 80% sensitivity and 50% to 76% specificity^{5,6}) are available, which could be used anywhere in the community. These tools take into account major risk factors such as family history, exercise levels, age, body mass index, waist circumference, dietary habits, medication history and history of dysglycemia; however, they perform poorly as stand-alone tests.⁷

A 2- or 3-stage screening test (e.g., the combination of a questionnaire and random capillary blood glucose testing, which yields 58% sensitivity and 94% specificity⁸) might be a more efficient use of resources, ensuring that OGTTs are not performed unnecessarily. Other combinations of near-patient tests and scoring tools that might be used in community settings should be studied, similar to the successful assessment in local pharmacies of people at risk of hypertension.⁹ It would be entirely possible, using a mixture of community-based measurements such as scoring tools for diabetes risk, fasting capillary blood glucose readings and near-patient testing of hemoglobin A_{1c} to target individuals who should undergo an OGTT. This might reduce the potential burden on both laboratories and family physicians.

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DOI:10.1503/cmaj.1041724

Clinical trial budgets

In May 1991, Ian Rusted chaired a 2-day workshop sponsored by the National Council on Bioethics in Human Research (now the National Council on Ethics in Human Research) entitled "Ethics of Clinical Trials for Research Ethics Boards."¹ The participants were representatives of the pharmaceutical industry, the Medical Research Council of Canada, Health and Welfare Canada and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, as well as members of research ethics boards from across Canada.

On reading the viewpoint by Lorraine Ferris and David Naylor,² the spirited response by Salim Yusuf³ and the rebuttal by Ferris and Naylor,⁴ I experienced a sense of déjà vu: the points of view expressed in this exchange mirror the conclusions of the 1991 workshop. Unfortunately, although the Tri-Council drafting committee had access to the workshop recommendations for financial accountability and conflict of interest, they were not incorporated in the Tri-Council policy statement.⁵ The authors and *CMAJ* are to be commended for revisiting the subject.

At the heart of the matter are issues critical to both patient care and clinical research. Both of these activities are dependent upon public trust, which must be earned through openness and integrity.

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Competing interests: Dr. Klassen is a past president of Canadian Society for Clinical Investigation and National Council on Ethics in Human Research.

DOI:10.1503/cmaj.1041762

We commend Salim Yusuf for his reply¹ to the call by Lorraine Ferris and David Naylor² for additional monitoring of clinical trials. Yusuf's point on the increasing complexity of regulation for clinical trial research is well taken, as is the point that complying with complex regulations creates significant costs. Although one of us (J.A.C.D.) has previously argued against an excessive reliance on clinical trials,³ it is clear that they represent the modern gold standard. Given this reality, it is essential that we not choke off this important type of research.

Increasing costs through the requirement to deal with nontransparent and complex regulations actually makes it harder for independent researchers to do research. We have recently seen the consequences of restricting clinical trials to large drug companies⁴ rather than independent academic investigators. It would seem more appropriate to have well-trained auditors who could iden-