

Institute of Population and Public Health
Applied Public Health Chair
Impact Case Study



Dr. Jan Sargeant:
“REFLECTing” on the reporting of veterinary clinical trials



Research Focus

Foodborne illnesses, such as salmonella, and other diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans pose a serious risk to population health. Using clinical trials to test the effectiveness of drugs and other interventions in controlling these illnesses is essential to ensuring the safety of Canada’s food supply.

Syntheses of clinical trials are a valuable source of information, but inconsistencies in the way trials are reported can seriously reduce the quality of the data they produce. To combat this problem, standardized reporting guidelines for human healthcare have been in place in Canada since 1996, when the Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT) statement was first published.

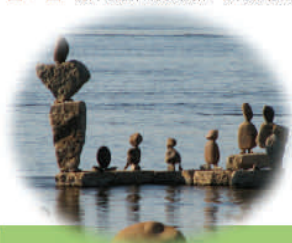
Recognizing that similar challenges exist with the clinical testing of livestock and food safety, Applied Public Health Chair Dr. Jan Sargeant spearheaded an effort to develop the first reporting guidelines for veterinary medicine.

Widely endorsed and supported by stakeholders in both Canada and the United States, the new Reporting Guidelines for Randomized Controlled Trials for livestock and food safety (REFLECT) statement is expected to have a profound effect on researchers, practitioners, and decision-makers in this important field and, ultimately, on the health of Canadians.

Research Impact: Making a Difference

In 2008, Dr. Sargeant led a series of evaluations on the quality of reporting in clinical trials undertaken for several sectors of veterinary medicine. The Chair found substantive deficiencies in the reporting of trials on on-farm food safety, livestock, and companion animals. In many cases, reports lacked the details necessary to summarize data and arrive at accurate conclusions about a particular intervention or outcome.

The first steps in developing the REFLECT statement involved publishing several articles and making numerous presentations to raise awareness of the issue of poor reporting quality for food safety and veterinary trials, and to engender support for moving forward with a possible solution.



Given its proven impact on the quality of reporting on clinical trials in human medicine, the CONSORT statement served as the solid foundation for the development of the new guidelines. With this information as a starting point, Drs. Sargeant and Annette O'Connor (Iowa State University) lead a steering committee and organized an expert consensus meeting to obtain input from a wide range of disciplines on the path ahead.

The effort to create, publish, and disseminate the REFLECT statement has raised issues and fostered multi-disciplinary discussions about the quality of reporting within the veterinary profession. By helping to forge strong, sustainable partnerships between the historically disparate animal and human health communities and integrate research, education, and knowledge translation, this initiative is greatly enhancing the ability to combat foodborne and other zoonotic illnesses.

The REFLECT statement has received unprecedented support and endorsement from peer-reviewed journals and funding from a wide range of government and non-government organizations in Canada and the US. Several veterinary colleges have expressed interest in using the statement as a teaching tool, and the Chair is involved in collaborations to create course materials for graduate students based on the guidelines.

Researchers anticipate that improved clinical trial conduct in these fields will have a positive impact on the veterinary profession, professional and graduate studies in veterinary medicine, disciplines involved in food safety clinical trials, and researchers in veterinary medicine and food safety. It will also affect the regulatory and public health organizations who make use of the knowledge gained from these studies—ultimately leading to improved human health through the production of a safe and abundant food supply.

Want to Know More?

To learn more about the REFLECT statement, please visit: <http://www.reflect-statement.org/statement/>
<http://www.equator-network.org/resource-centre/library-of-health-research-reporting/reporting-guidelines-in-other-research-fields/reporting-guidelines-in-other-research-fields/>

To learn more about the Centre for Public Health and Zoonoses, please visit:
<http://www.ovc.uoguelph.ca/cphaz/>

Dr. Jan Sargeant is the CIHR/PHAC Applied Public Health Chair in Meeting the Zoonotic Disease Public Health Challenge: Integrated Methodologies for Research and Application

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