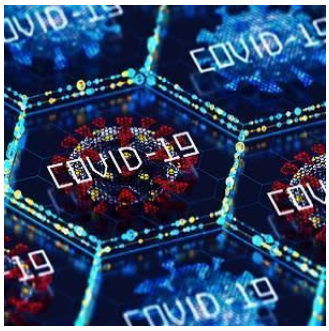
ICU
MANAGEMENT & PRACTICE

COVID-19: Readjusting Clinical Trials



Scientific research has been significantly disrupted because of COVID-19. The ability to conduct clinical trials in a safe and effective manner has been affected. Thousands of clinical trials have been suspended or stopped due to lockdown and other restrictions. There has also been a reorientation in clinical trial research towards COVID-19.

There have been several factors disrupting clinical research. First of all, in order to reduce the risk of infection, many clinical trials stopped enrolling new patients. Those who were already enrolled continued to receive treatment, but physical distancing was ensured. Therefore, patients were provided with medication at their homes by a distributor. Many trials shifted from the distribution of drugs at the trial site to direct-to-patient courier services. In-person visits for checkups and other aspects were shifted to teleconferencing.

Approximately 80% of non-COVID-19 trials were stopped or interrupted. Medical research that is not directly related to COVID-19 has been disrupted. Laboratories are closed, conferences have been cancelled, and many resources are lost. Financial losses within academic medical centres is another spillover effect of COVID-19. Researchers have had to pull away from working on clinical trials to working in emergency medical care during the pandemic.

The cancellation and slowdown of clinical trials because of COVID-19 is likely to have an impact on early career researchers, statisticians and epidemiologists. The only consolation is the number of new COVID-19 trials has increased and research in this area is on full thrust. Since December 2019, when COVID-19 first emerged, 2995 clinical trials have been registered.

However, disruption to patients, researchers and institutions is still quite significant and is likely to have a long-term impact on clinical research. One good thing is that COVID-19 has exposed the need to improve clinical trial design, conduct and reporting and to ensure that the research that is being conducted is of the highest quality.

Source: The Lancet

Image Credit: iStock

Published on : Wed, 2 Sep 2020