Letter to the Editor: Response to Klebanoff

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In response to our paper discussing methods for analyzing randomised trials including multiple births,[1] Klebanoff raises an interesting ethical question: Should parents of twins be informed at the time of consent if each of their infants will only be given a weight of a half in the analysis?[2] This question is only relevant if the analysis will be performed using cluster-weighted generalised estimating equations (GEEs), rather than our recommended approach of standard GEEs with an independence working correlation structure, and may best be addressed through discussion between human research ethics committees across the globe with the aim of reaching a consensus view. An important factor to consider in this debate is that there are many other situations where study participants are weighted differentially in the analysis. Examples include the use of survey weights and inverse probability weighting to handle missing data,[3] and the analysis of clustered data using standard GEEs with a non-independence working correlation structure to improve efficiency when cluster size is non-informative.[4] If there is indeed an ethical responsibility to inform participants or their caregivers when their data will receive a weight other than one in the analysis, this will have consequences for more than just the current context of randomised trials including multiple births. It may be that the greater ethical issue here is whether each infant from a multiple birth will actually be included in the analysis. Excluding data from one twin remains a popular analysis strategy,[5] but is unnecessary given the availability

of analysis methods that can accommodate data from both twins, including those discussed in our paper.[1]

References

References (max 5)

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