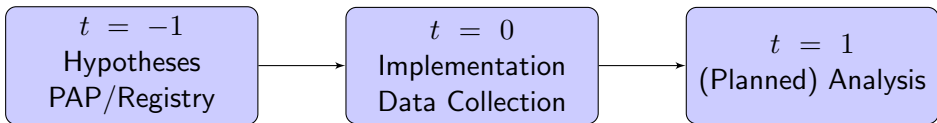

CEGA Conference on Pre-Analysis Plans and Study Registration: Comment

Aprajit Mahajan

December 7, 2012



- Kate and Ben mention good reasons for PAP/Registries:
 - Publication Bias (Donor/Vested Interests)
 - Subgroup Analysis / Specifications / Outcome delineation
- They also argue against rigidity. Focus on two issues here that I think are relevant:
 - Implementation Issues (Protocol control).
 - The Experimenter is also the Statistician.

Implementation

- Much less control over protocol than in the lab.
 - Arguably, central to enterprise: closer to effectiveness trials.
 - Interested in behavior generally (ITT and IV)
- Greater variability in implementation \implies Much harder to write comprehensive PAP
- Much more scope for “deviations” during implementation, which may be first-order. As K&B argue, not knowledge-maximizing to discard if not in PAP.
- Aside: Choice of implementation partner may be much bigger threat (“Cherry Tree Picking”) to (external) validity.

Data and Analysis

- Experimenters are the statisticians: So much more interplay between implementation and data analysis.
- Economists very used to this (“free-form data exploration”). Economic theory is “inoculation” against data mining.
- Suggests “unplanned” analyses will continue to be included in economic RCT papers.
- Usefulness of mandatory PAP filings in such a framework, particularly if publishing RCT based “planned” confirmations of previously “unplanned” results is hard.