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Introduction

Design of Treatment Trials for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders

Design of Treatment Trials Committee ... Sander J.O. Veldhuyzen van Zanten

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This document addresses the design of trials to assess the efficacy of new treatments for functional gastrointestinal disorders (FGID), emphasizing trials in irritable bowel syndrome and dyspepsia, because most research has been undertaken in these conditions. The double-blind, randomized, placebo-controlled, parallel group trial remains the preferred design. Randomized withdrawal designs, although encouraged by the European Agency for the Evaluation of Medicinal Products, have the same potential disadvantages as a crossover design, including carryover effects, unmasking (unblinding), and overestimation of the potential benefit for clinical practice. Innovative trial designs that evaluate intermittent (on demand) treatment are likely to become more common in the future. Investigators should include as broad a spectrum of patients as possible and should report recruitment strategies, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and attrition data. The primary analysis should be based on the proportion of patients in each treatment arm who satisfy an a priori treatment responder definition, or a prespecified clinically

meaningful change in a patient-reported symptom improvement measure. Such measures of improvement are psychometrically validated subjective global assessments or a change from baseline in a validated symptom severity questionnaire. It is unethical to change the responder definition after a trial begins. Data analysis should address all patients enrolled, using an intention-to-treat principle. Reporting of results should follow the Consolidated Standards for Reporting Trials guidelines and include an analysis of harms data and secondary outcome measures to support or explain the primary outcome. Trials should be registered in a public location, prior to initiation, and should be published even if the results are negative or inconclusive.



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Abbreviations used in this paper

CONSORT, Consolidated Standards for Reporting Trials; EMEA, European Agency for the Evaluation of Medicinal Products; FD, functional dyspepsia; FGID, functional gastrointestinal disorder; ITT, intention to treat; NNH, number needed to harm; NNT, number needed to treat; IBS, irritable bowel syndrome

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