# Predictors of Missed Research Appointments in a Randomized Placebo-Controlled Trial

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## Objectives
- Missed research appointments (“loss to follow-up”) are a common problem in prospective trials. A better understanding of the factors associated with failure to keep important research appointments might influence future study design and the interpretation of studies with high drop out rates.
- The primary aim of this study was to determine predictors of missed research appointments in a prospective randomized placebo injection-controlled trial with evaluations 1 to 3 and 5 to 8 months after enrollment.

## Methods
- Secondary use of data from 104 patients who were enrolled in a prospective double-blind randomized controlled trial comparing arm-specific disability after a single injection of dexamethasone and lidocaine versus a single injection of placebo (lidocaine only) for 63 patients (61%) with lateral epicondylosis, 17 patients (16%) with trapeziometacarpal arthrosis, and 24 patients (23%) with de Quervain syndrome.
- Each patient completed a set of questionnaires at time of enrollment.
- Bivariate and multivariable analyses were used to determine factors associated with missed research appointments 1 to 3 and 5 to 8 months after enrollment.

## Results
- 14 patients (13%) did not return for the 1st follow-up and 33 patients (32%) did not return for the 2nd follow-up. Four patients (all with lateral epicondylosis) that missed the 1st research visit did return for the 2nd research visit.
- The best logistic regression model for missing the 1st research visit explained 35% of the variability and included younger age, belief that health can be controlled, and no college education.
- The best logistic regression model for missing the 2nd research visit explained 17% of the variability and included greater pain intensity, less personal responsibility for health, and diagnosis (trapeziometacarpal arthrosis and de Quervain syndrome).

## Conclusions
- Younger patients with no college education, who believe their health can be controlled, are more likely to miss a research appointment when enrolled in a randomized placebo injection-controlled trial.
- We speculate that the following factors might improve retention of subjects in prospective research: education of research personnel that younger, less educated patients can be more difficult to retain; use of as many potential methods of contact; and inviting and welcoming patients to express their dissatisfaction and providing an easy means to do so.