Read the trial, not just the headline

A reusable reading checklist. Leave an item unresolved if the full record does not answer it.

1. Identify the record

Write the publication date, trial ID and source type. A recruiting listing is not a completed result.[2]

2. Match the population

Who was enrolled, who was excluded, and how closely do they match the group discussed in the claim?

3. Name the comparator

Placebo, active treatment or no control? Does the record actually test the head-to-head comparison being claimed?

4. Find the prespecified endpoint

Record the primary outcome, measurement units and time point, rather than substituting a favorable secondary result.

5. Check the denominator and analysis

Distinguish randomized, treated and analyzed participants. Record the estimand and how missing data were handled.

6. Keep magnitude and uncertainty together

Write the effect estimate and confidence interval, not only the p value or the best-performing arm.

7. Read harms and discontinuations

Record adverse events, serious events and discontinuations, including the comparator and group sizes.

8. Check attribution and scope

Note sponsor, funding, conflicts, duration and unresolved risks. Do not equate trial phase with approval.

Example: the 2025 eloralintide monotherapy study randomized 263 adults without type 2 diabetes and compared eloralintide with placebo, not retatrutide.[1]

PAGE SOURCES

1. Worked-example trial: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41207310/

2. Protocol/listing example: https://trials.lilly.com/en-US/trial/664295