

Baseline characteristics

Initial collection of [demographics](#) which serves as a basis for comparison with the subsequently acquired data.

The demographic, clinical and other objective data collected for each participant at the beginning of a clinical trial before intervention.

Initial collection which serves as a basis for comparison with the subsequently acquired data.

CHARACTERISTIC	STUDY (n = 5)	CONTROL (n = 5)
Demographics		
Adult population (≥ 18 yr)	123,829	121,881
Mean age	39.0	39.2
Proportion male	48.9%	49.0%
Proportion white	91.4%	90.9%
Proportion of workforce in lumber/ construction/ transportation industries	15.4%	16.2%
Proportion of households receiving foodstamps	7.8%	6.3%
Mean household income	\$35,536	\$36,968
Health system		
Primary care physicians† per 10,000	7.4	6.6
Chiropractors per 10,000	3.2	2.8
Spine surgeons‡ per 10,000	4.2	3.0
Hospital bed occupancy	63.2%	64.4%
Managed care penetrance	16.8%	22.9%
Back surgery		
Rate per 100,000	238	212
Proportion involving spinal fusions	12.4%	9.9%
Average length of stay, d	4.5	4.9
1-year reoperation rate	4.9%	6.3%

Randomised controlled trials aim to compare groups of participants that differ only with respect to the intervention (treatment); while proper random assignment prevents selection bias, it does not guarantee that the groups are equivalent at baseline—e.g., any differences in baseline characteristics are the result of chance rather than bias. The study groups should be compared at baseline for important demographic and clinical characteristics.

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