Examples of Bias in Experiments

Response

unbiased total effect

Problem

Bias

1

Post-randomisation adjustment

treatment effect

Post-treatment adjustment blocks

2	Post-treatment adjustment induces collider stratification bias	U R $\longrightarrow A_0$ L_1 Y_2	unbiased total effect $A_0 - \underbrace{\hat{L_1}}_{} \longrightarrow Y_2$
3	Demographic measures at the end of study condition on a collider that opens a back-door path.	$R \longrightarrow A_0 \qquad Y_1 \longrightarrow L_2$	L_0 A_1 Y_2
4	Demographics measured post-outcome	$U \longrightarrow A_0 \longrightarrow Y_1 \longrightarrow L_2$	L_0 A_1 Y_2
Directed measurement error			
5	Treatment affects measurement error of the outcome	$\mathcal{R} \longrightarrow A_1 \longrightarrow U_{\Delta Y} \qquad (Y_2) \longrightarrow Y_2'$	Sensitivity analyses
Confounding of the per-protocol effect			
6	Per protocol effect in a sustained treatment is lost because a confounder affects adherence	$U \longrightarrow L_0 \qquad \mathcal{R} \longrightarrow A_1 \qquad L_2 \longrightarrow A_2 \qquad Y$	Condition on $\fbox{$L_0$}$ and $\fbox{$L_1$}$
7	Per protocol effect lost in sustained treatment because treatment affects confounder of adherence	$U \longrightarrow L_0 \longrightarrow A_1 \longrightarrow L_2 \longrightarrow A_2 \qquad Y$	Use special estimators
8	Per protocol effect lost in sustained treatment because both measured and unmeasured confounders affect treatment adherence	$U \longrightarrow L_0 \qquad \qquad A_1 \longrightarrow L_2 \qquad \qquad Y$	Use special estimators: stronger assumptions
Key : A denotes the treatment, sequential in \mathcal{G} 6-8; Y denotes the outcome; \mathcal{R} denotes randomisation; U denotes an unmeasured confounder. Note there is no arrow into treatment assignment at baseline because treatment assignment is randomised; L denotes a common cause of treatment and outcome or a proxy of such a common cause or mediator along the path between treatment and outcome. Whether L should be conditioned upon depends on structural features of context; L black box denotes conditioning on variable L ; \longrightarrow black arrow assumes causality; \longrightarrow red arrow denotes a path of bias; $$ indicates a path for bias separating A and Y ; L red box denotes a case when conditioning on X induces bias; L Dashed circle: Latent variable, not adjusted (assumed for U).			