Strategies for the evaluation of impact of GPS on high risk offenders in the USA

Marc Renzema
Kutztown University
renzema@kutztown.edu

Interesting coincidence

- Marc Renzema & Evan Mayo-Wilson, "Can electronic monitoring reduce crime for moderate to high risk offenders?" J. Exp. Crim., July 2005, V1, N2
- National Institute of Justice RFP 2/07: "Evaluating the effectiveness of electronic monitoring for moderate to high-risk offenders under supervision"

Inclusion criteria	Allowed characteristics
Comparison groups	Probation, parole, ISP, prison, other
Group assignment	Random, matching, historical
Outcome measures	Incarceration, arrest, conviction, more

Chronic problems in the “good” studies

- Lack of treatment integrity
- Failed randomization
  - Other selection issues
  - Comparing those who received EM to those “left behind”
- Different periods at risk

More problems

- Failure to delineate experimental and control conditions
- Treatment group contamination
  - Florida DOC

10 Years of EM Research USA

- 1997: $474K domestic violence EM; $50K technology development
- 1998: feasibility study in wide-area non-GPS monitoring
- 1999: “best practices” manual, $108K
- 2006: update of manual, $50K
- 2007: $1,000K RFP

Significant features of RFP

- Does not see EM as a “program”
- Preference for experimental studies
- Focus on riskier offenders
- Looks at recidivism during and after EM

Mid-March review lessons

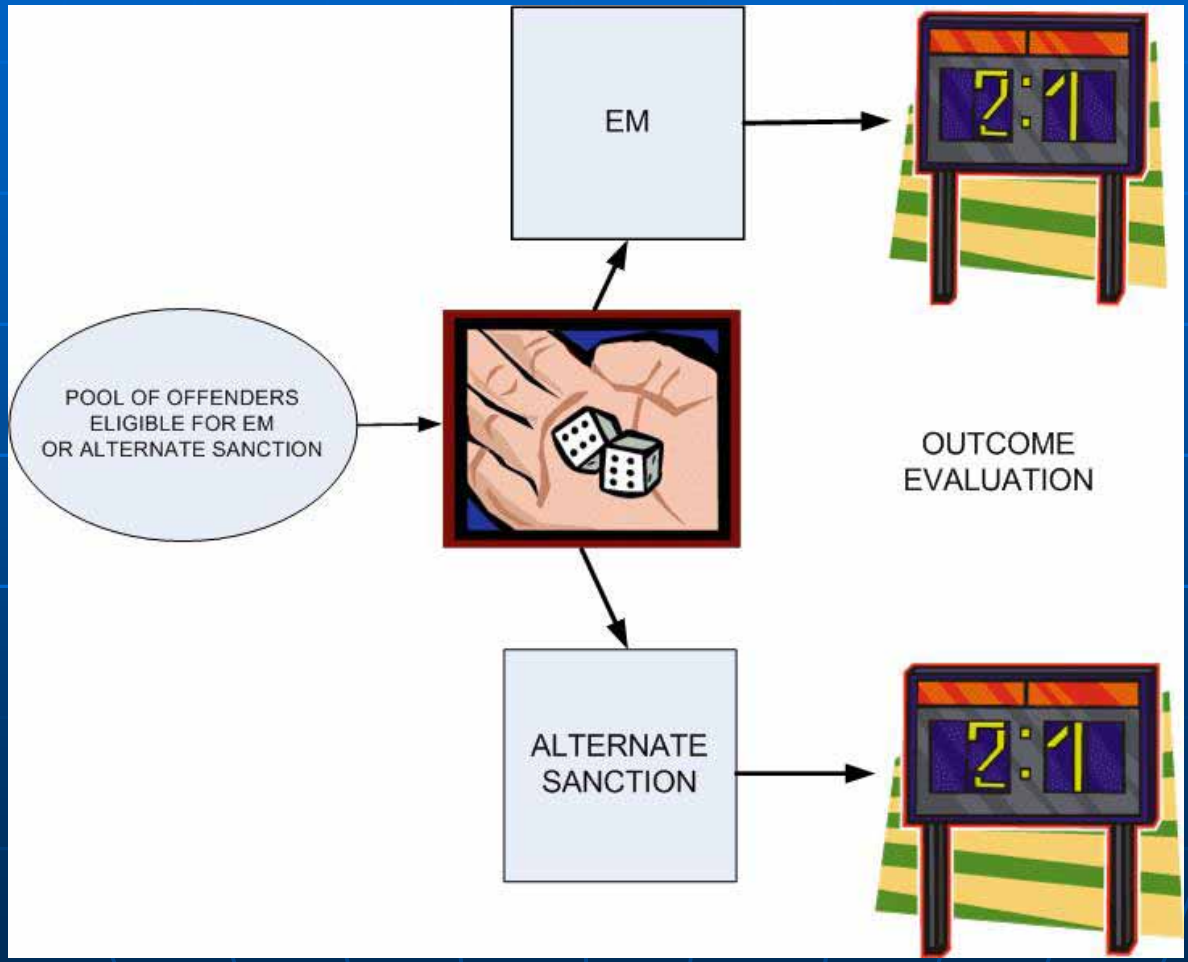
- 20% of proposals completely adequate in generation of compared groups
- Most proposals inadequate in treatment delineation & cost-benefit analysis

- LESSON #1: Even a million dollars will not buy definitive research in the USA

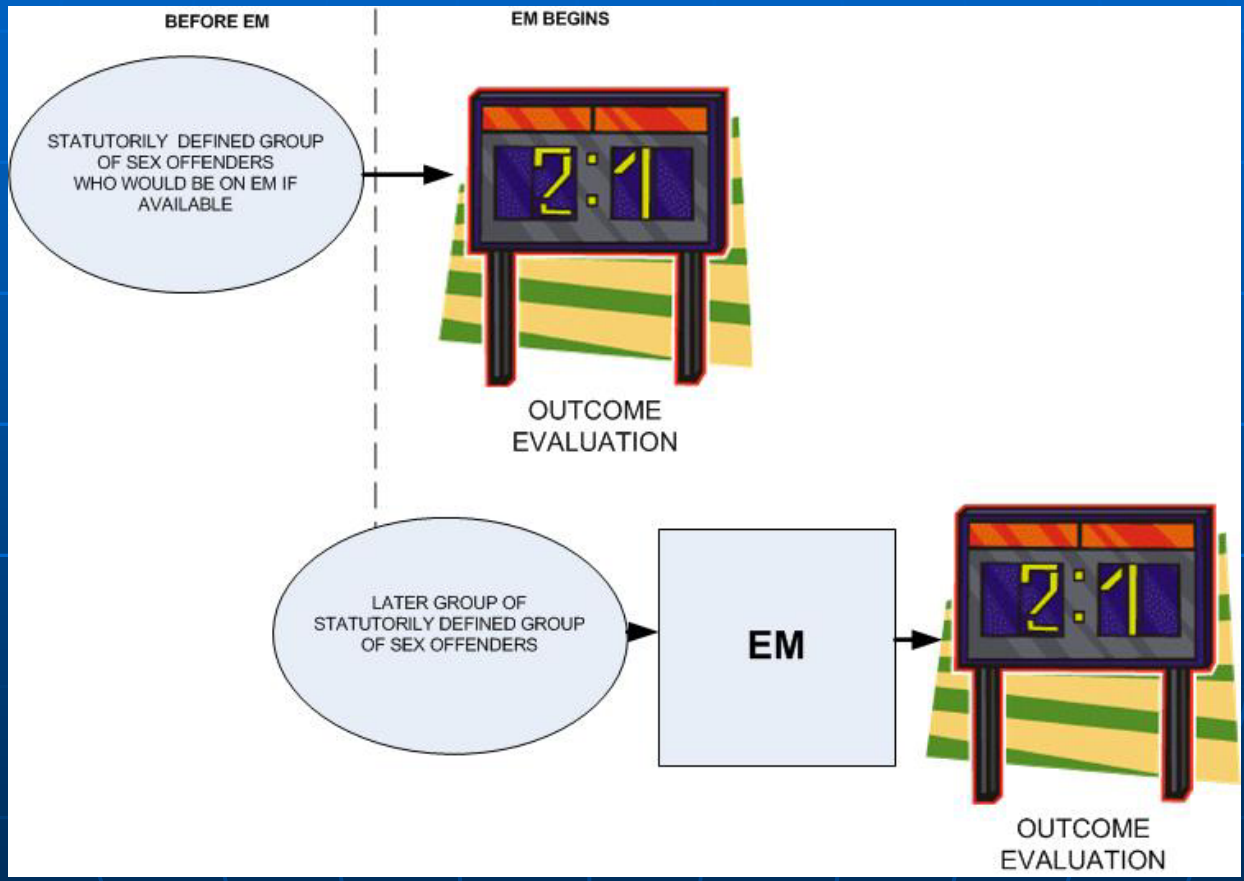
Lessons

- Lesson #2: High costs
  - Coders and programmers
  - Shortage of offenders → multiple sites
  - Treatment delineation expensive
  - Totals roughly: $250-$1000/subject
    - 300 E, 300C = $150-$600,000

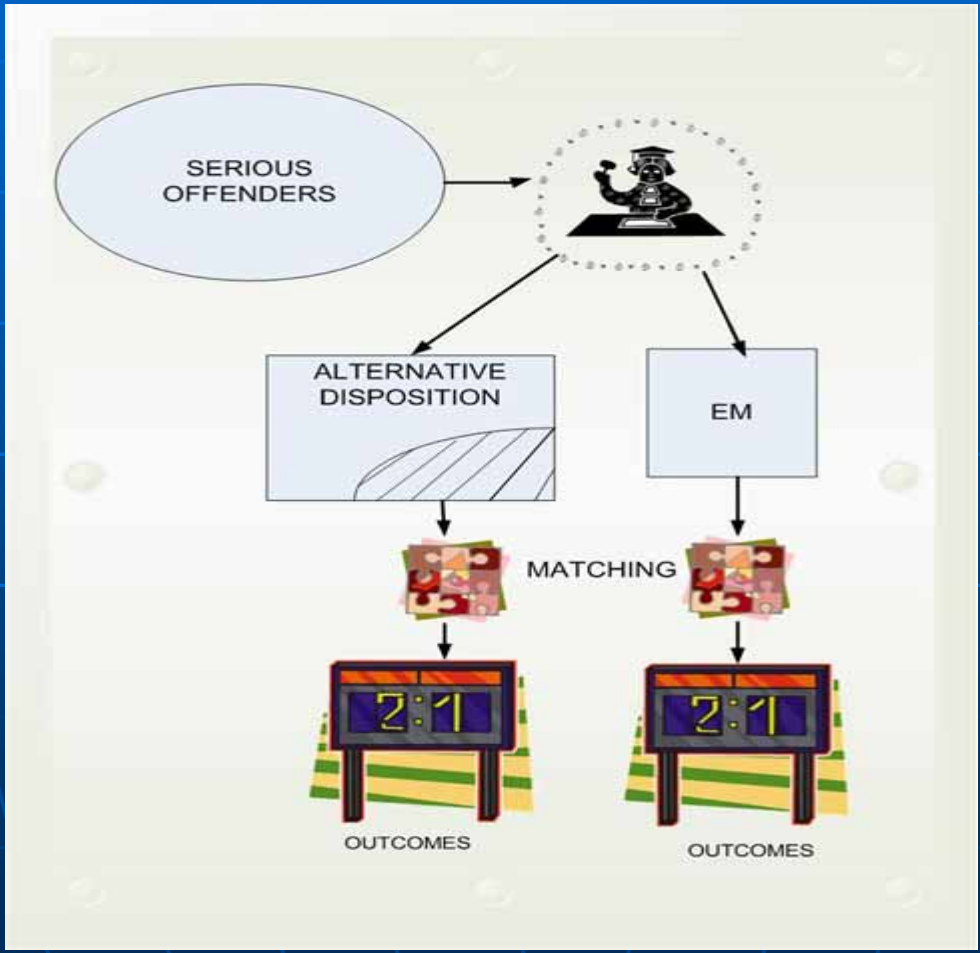
Lessons: posttest only



Lessons: static group (oversimplified)



Lessons: matching



Lessons

- Lesson #3: Even a million dollar bribe won't get you random allocation in the USA
- Lesson #4: even smart people don't always do power analysis

Lessons

- Lesson #5: subjects may be in short supply
  - Not enough carefully classified offenders
  - Not enough equipment
  - Particularly troublesome with domestic violence
- Lesson #6: beware of evaluation of start-up programs

Lessons

- Lesson #7: Social researchers equipped to evaluate program process and outcomes seem not to have cost-benefit analysis skills.
  - They also do not think like geographers or crime-mappers.
- Lesson #8: Process evaluation has not “caught on”

Roads not taken

- Can monitoring data be used to predict recidivism?
- Does EM enhance program attendance?
- Is there a rebound effect?
- Is “stepping” down more effective than “cold turkey”?

More roads not taken

- Can EM be used to enhance child support payments?
- Can EM be used to undermine social networks that support criminal behavior?
- Does EM have different impact on the mentally retarded and FAS?
- Does family function affect EM outcome?

Still more roads not taken

- Can GPS be used to minimize crime contagion for offenders residing in high-crime areas?
- Can GPS exclusion zones drawn explicitly to reduce target visibility be more effective than generalized limits?
- Of the 4 GPS varieties, what works best with what kinds of offenders?

Now, finally, maybe EM research is maturing. The price has, however, been high.

John E. Couey,
FDOC picture