CLINICAL TRIALS

10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT CLINICAL TRIALS

1. Clinical trials are research studies that involve people. Each study tries to answer scientific questions hoping to find better ways to prevent, diagnose or treat cancer.

2. In cancer research, a clinical trial is designed to show how a particular anticancer strategy—for instance, a promising drug, a gene therapy treatment, a new diagnostic test, or a possible prevention technique—affects the people who receive it.

3. A clinical trial is one stage of a long and careful cancer research process. Testing a new drug on mice and getting promising results, for example, is a preliminary step to human studies. Treatments that work well in mice do not always work well in people.

4. People can benefit from clinical trials. In treatment trials, for example, participants receive high-quality cancer care while being amongst the first to benefit if a new approach is proven better than the current standard treatment.

5. Are there drawbacks? New treatments under study are not always better than, or even as good as, standard care. They may have unexpected side effects. Informed consent is a required step. You will discuss the study’s goals, the treatments and tests that will be involved, and the possible benefits and risks, before you decide whether or not to participate. Your participation is voluntary.

6. Who is eligible to participate in clinical trials? Each study has its own guidelines for who can participate. Generally, participants are alike in key ways—such as the type and stage of cancer, age, gender, and other factors.

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7. Do some people receive a placebo in clinical trials? In treatment trials involving people who have cancer, placebos are very rarely used.

8. Many treatment trials are designed to compare a new treatment with the best treatment currently known for a cancer based on the results of past research. In these studies, patients are randomly assigned to one group or another.

9. Where do clinical trials take place? They are underway all over the country—in cancer centers, major medical centers, community hospitals and clinics, physicians' offices and veterans' and military hospitals in numerous cities and towns around the United States.

10. Who pays for the patient care costs on clinical trials? Health plans and managed care providers do not always cover all patient care related costs in a study. What they cover varies by both the plan and the study. Ask the doctor, nurse or social worker from the study to help you determine in advance what costs are covered and what the cost to you could be. The research costs, such as data management, are covered by the study’s sponsor.

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