Brain Stem Glioma - Childhood - About Clinical Trials

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About Clinical Trials

ON THIS PAGE: You will learn more about clinical trials, which are the main way that new medical approaches are tested to see how well they work. To see other pages in this guide, use the colored boxes on the right side of your screen, or click ?Next? at the bottom.

Doctors and scientists are always looking for better ways to treat children with brain stem glioma. To make scientific advances, doctors create research studies involving volunteers, called clinical trials.

Many clinical trials are focused on new treatments, evaluating whether a new treatment is safe, effective, and possibly better than the current (standard) treatment. These types of studies evaluate new drugs, different combinations of existing treatments, new approaches to radiation therapy or surgery, and new methods of treatment. Children who participate in clinical trials are often among the first to receive new treatments before they are widely available. However, there is no guarantee that the new treatment will be safe, effective, or better than a standard treatment.

There are also clinical trials that study new ways to ease symptoms and side effects during treatment and manage the late effects that may occur after treatment. Talk with your child?s doctor about clinical trials regarding side effects. In addition, there are ongoing studies about ways to prevent the disease.

People decide to participate in clinical trials for many reasons. For some children, a clinical trial is the best treatment option available. Because standard treatments are not perfect, people are often willing to face the added uncertainty of a clinical trial in the hope of a better result. Other people volunteer for clinical trials because they know that these studies are the only way to make progress in treating brain stem glioma. Even if they do not benefit directly from the clinical trial, their participation may benefit future children with brain stem glioma.

Sometimes people have concerns that, by participating in a clinical trial, they may receive no treatment by being given a placebo or a ?sugar pill.? The use of placebos in cancer clinical trials is rare. When a placebo is used in a study, it is done with the full knowledge of the participants. Find out more about placebos in cancer clinical trials. [2]

To join a clinical trial, parents and children must participate in a process known as informed consent. During informed consent, the doctor should list all of the patient?s options, so that the person understands how the new treatment differs from the standard treatment. The doctor must also list all of the risks of the new treatment, which may or may not be different from the risks of standard treatment. Finally, the doctor must explain what will be required of each patient in order to participate in the clinical trial, including the number of doctor visits, tests, and the schedule of treatment.

For specific topics being studied for brain stem glioma, learn more in the Latest Research [3] section.

People who participate in a clinical trial may stop participating at any time for any personal or medical reason. This may include that the new treatment is not working or there are serious side effects. Clinical trials are also closely monitored by experts who watch for any problems with each study. It is important that parents talk with the doctor and researchers about who will be providing their child?s treatment and care during the clinical trial, after the clinical trial ends, and/or if the patient chooses to leave the clinical trial before it ends.

Cancer.Net offers a lot of information about clinical trials in other areas of the website, including a complete section on clinical trials [4] and places to search for clinical trials for a specific type of tumor [5].

To continue reading this guide, choose ?Next? (below, right) to read about the areas of research going on today about brain stem glioma. Or, use the colored boxes located on the right side of your screen to visit any section.

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/about-us
[2] http://www.cancer.net/node/24390
[3] http://www.cancer.net/node/18559
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