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Breast Cancer - Inflammatory - About Clinical Trials [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the Cancer.Net Editorial Board [2], 04/2010

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, use the menu on the side of your screen.

Doctors and scientists are always looking for better ways to treat patients with breast cancer. A clinical trial is a way to test a new treatment to prove that it is safe, effective, and possibly better than a standard treatment. The clinical trial may be evaluating a new drug, a new combination of existing treatments, a new approach to radiation therapy or surgery, a new method of treatment or prevention, ways to help patients manage symptoms, or improve a patient's quality of life. Patients who participate in clinical trials are 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.

Patients decide to participate in clinical trials for many reasons. For some patients, a clinical trial is the best treatment option available. Because standard treatments are not perfect, patients are often willing to face the added uncertainty of a clinical trial in the hope of a better result. Other patients volunteer for clinical trials because they know that finding new drugs and other therapies is the only way to make progress in treating breast cancer. Even if they do not benefit directly from the clinical trial, their participation may benefit future patients with breast cancer. 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 [3].

To join a clinical trial, patients must participate in a process known as informed consent. [4] During informed consent, the doctor should list all of the patient's options, so that the person understands the standard treatment, and 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. Learn more about clinical trials [5], including patient safety, phases of a clinical trial, deciding to participate in a clinical trial, questions to ask the research team, and links to find cancer clinical trials [6].

For specific topics being studied for breast cancer, learn more in the Current Research [7] section.

The next section helps explain the areas of research going on today about this type of cancer. Use the menu on the side of your screen to select Latest Research, or you can select another section, to continue reading this guide.

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/breast-cancer-inflammatory/about-clinical-trials
[2] http://www.cancer.net/about-us
[3] http://www.cancer.net/node/24390
[4] http://www.cancer.net/node/24386
[5] http://www.cancer.net/node/24863
[6] http://www.cancer.net/node/24878
[7] http://www.cancer.net/node/18587