



Clinical Trials Myth Busters – for Patients

Introduction to Cancer Clinical Trials

Thanks for your interest in cancer clinical trials! Don't let the word "trial" keep you from participating; the reality is, you will get the standard of care, including the currently approved drugs, in addition to the chance at receiving the newest treatment.

Clinical trials are carefully designed, highly regulated studies where patients volunteer to participate and help to discover new treatments, medications, and procedures.

Making new discoveries about how to prevent, detect, or treat diseases is like putting together a puzzle. Researchers, healthcare providers, and patients all contribute information, observations, and data that we use to form a clear picture of how to improve cancer care. Without patients like you, we would be missing crucial pieces to the puzzle.

Myth: Clinical Trials are for Other People

Reality: Clinical trials are for everyone. In fact, we need more people to participate in clinical trials, especially Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) cancer patients.

The participation rate for Black or African American patients in clinical trials is about 5%. However, this group makes up nearly 14% of the US population. We see a similar contrast in patients who identify as Latino Americans, which account for nearly 20% of the US population but only 6% of clinical trial enrollments. Indigenous people are so underrepresented in clinical trials that reports may not reflect their data.

When BIPOC representation in clinical trials is low, we do not have a complete understanding of a drug's safety and efficacy. Your participation in cancer clinical trials is one of the best ways to ensure treatments are effective for all.

Myth: I Might Only get a Placebo Instead of a Real Drug

Reality: This is a very common misconception! For cancer clinical trials, no participants get only a placebo. Everyone gets what is called the same "standard of care." That means you will get what medical experts agree is the proper treatment for your specific type of disease. You may then also get the newest drug or a placebo.

Myth: Approved Drugs are More Effective than Trial Drugs

Reality: This is another common myth. The drugs we are investigating are usually thought to be just as safe and effective as the approved drugs. In fact, sometimes current outcomes leave room for improvement and that's exactly why new drugs are being developed.

Sources: U.S. Food and Drug Administration. (2019). 2019 Drug Trials Snapshot Summary Report. Retrieved from <https://www.fda.gov/media/135337/download>
United States Census Bureau. (2020). 2020 Census of Population and Housing. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/decade/2020.html>

Ready to Learn More?

Take the next step with confidence.
Visit www.hoparx.org/timetotalkdiversity to learn how cancer clinical trials could fit into your health plan. Let's move forward together.



Myth: I Would be Just Another Data Point

Reality: Ethnicity, age, and other personal factors may play a role in how someone responds to the treatment being studied. For that reason, participation is especially important for people from within groups who have historically been underrepresented in clinical research or underserved in the medical community.

It has been a long time coming, but we can increase representation in clinical trial data – starting right now, with you!

Myth: Clinical Trials are Dangerous

Reality: Most clinical trials do not carry any higher risks than the standard of care treatment. There are many types of trials, and each is designed to weigh potential risks against the potential benefits. Patients enrolled in clinical trials often have more visits than those taking only the approved drugs to ensure patient safety. Trials are closely monitored by government agencies, drug manufacturers, and hospital review boards to ensure that they are safe and ethical for you as the participant.

Myth: I do Not Want to be a Guinea Pig

Reality: Think of yourself as more of a volunteer researcher than a test subject. Some studies may have limited human data at the start, but your health is closely monitored throughout the clinical trial. Physicians, researchers, oncology pharmacists, and other clinicians involved in your care are highly trained to understand the potential risks, side effects, drug interactions, and other safety concerns related to the study drug. Your participation is voluntary, and you can leave the study at any time.

Myth: English is my Second Language, so I am not a Good Candidate

Reality: Your uniqueness is not a barrier – in fact we need more voices like yours to ensure our clinical trial data is inclusive.

Many study teams include language interpreters for non-English speaking or reading participants. You will find that doctors, nurses, and pharmacists are committed to making sure you understand what the study asks of you and will listen closely to your feedback. Materials, like patient consent forms, may be requested in your primary language to ensure you understand your participation.

Myth: Clinical Trials are Only Done in Big Cities

Reality: This isn't always the case anymore. The pandemic disrupted clinical trial delivery and brought telehealth to the forefront. We learned that people living in rural settings could participate in clinical trials without the long trek to major cancer centers. In addition, some of the largest studies are now offered in both community cancer centers and at large academic hospitals.

Myth: Everybody will Benefit from my Clinical Trial Except Me

Reality: While your participation does help us advance medical research and develop new treatments for the masses, there are many potential benefits for you.

Trial participants receive access to the most advanced treatments before they are even available elsewhere. Plus, through your participation in cancer research, you will have additional touchpoints with your care team as they closely monitor and document your treatment.

Myth: I Wouldn't Even Know Where to Start with a Cancer Clinical Trial

Reality: That's why we are here! Your oncology pharmacist is a great resource and can walk you through what to expect during enrollment and throughout your participation. Visit www.hoparx.org/timetotalkdiversity to get started.