



Patient & Family Guide

2018

# Cancer Research and Clinical Trials



**Nova Scotia Cancer Care Program**

[www.nscancercare.ca](http://www.nscancercare.ca)

# Cancer Research and Clinical Trials

Research has led to many improvements in cancer care and treatment. Clinical trials are one reason we have safe and useful cancer care today. They provide us with hope for better care in the future.

## What is a clinical trial?

Clinical trials look at new treatments or a group of existing treatments in people with cancer. Many of today's treatments are the result of what we learned from other clinical trials.

During a clinical trial, information is gathered about:

- The effect treatments have on patients
- The side effects of treatment
- How safe the treatment is
- How well the treatment works against the cancer
- Whether or not the new treatment is better than the usual treatment for that type of cancer

Taking part in a clinical trial is voluntary. You can say no to any research, or stop taking part in a clinical trial, and you will receive the same level of care.

## How are clinical trials developed?

The search for better cancer treatments starts with research in the laboratory. Clinical trials build on these results so new drugs and treatments can be developed. New cancer treatments must be safe and effective before they can be offered to patients.

**What are your questions? Please ask.  
We are here to help you.**

## **How can I take part in a clinical trial?**

Clinical trials are not available for all types of cancer. Your oncologist (cancer doctor) is aware of the clinical trials available for you and they will discuss these with you. Ask your doctor or nurse if you are able to take part in a clinical trial. If you are eligible and you want to learn more about it, you will meet with a clinical trial nurse. Information will be given about the clinical trial and you will be able to ask questions. You will have time to think about your choices and discuss them with your family, friends and other doctors. A nurse will contact you regarding your decision. If you decide to join a clinical trial you will be asked to sign an approval form which gives details of the trial.

## **What are the benefits of a clinical trial?**

- All patients will receive the best care according to the current cancer care guidelines
- You are taking an active role in your care by looking at all the cancer care choices available to you, including clinical trials
- By being involved in a clinical trial, you are taking part in cancer research

## **Will I find out the results of the clinical trial?**

If there is a direct impact on your care during the trial, you will be told as soon as possible. When a clinical trial has finished, a period of time is needed to study the results. Sometimes, the trial will follow patients after the treatment is completed. When a clinical trial is over, and the patients have been followed long enough, the results may be written in a medical journal or presented at meetings. This may take many years. Ask your doctor about the progress of your clinical trial.

## **Questions to ask**

- Is there a clinical trial for my cancer?
- What standard of care will I get if I do not take part in a clinical trial?
- How much time is required to participate in a trial?
- Will I need additional tests?
- Can I receive my therapy in my home hospital?
- Can I choose which therapy I receive?

- What happens if I go on the study and I get side effects or don't want to continue?
- Are there any risks related to being a part of the clinical trial?
- Are there extra costs to me?

To find the cancer clinical trials available in Nova Scotia go to <http://www.novascotia.canadiancancertrials.ca>.



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If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider. The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.

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