

Re: Participation in experimental treatments

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.med.diseases.cancer/2005-03/0057.html>

From: J (*auteur_at_anon.invalid*)

Date: 03/03/05

Date: Thu, 03 Mar 2005 04:10:50 -0500

eveline wrote:

> *participation in cancer trials offers benefits. People with advanced cancer*
> *who try experimental treatments are helped more than previously thought,*

http://www.cancerguide.org/clinical_trials.html

CancerGuide: Clinical Trials and Experimental Treatments

Clinical trials are conducted within a complex system with fairly well defined rules. A good understanding of the system gives you a framework for making good decisions. It also gives you an essential framework for understanding clinical trial results reported in the medical literature. There are can find brief superficial explanations of the sytem in many sites. My approach is to give you a detailed and intensely patient oriented tour specifically designed to help you find the best treatment.

Understanding the details will help you:

- * Ask the best questions about trials you're considering
- * Know which kind of trial is likely to be appropriate and more quickly weed out inappropriate trials
- * Recognize promising trials
- * Recognize unpromising trials
- * Give you other options if eligiblity or randomization is making it hard to get the treatment you want
- * Maximize your odds through strategic thinking

In this article I set the stage with a brief introduction to the system, and then link you to CancerGuide's detailed Phase by Phase Guides. If you're already somewhat familiar with clinical trial phases you may want to skip directly to the detailed guides.

A Few Important Principles

As you go through CancerGuide's clinical trial articles, there are a few general principles which you'll want to keep in mind which will help you put it all together.

Promise and Uncertainty

I talk much about things being more or less promising based on the data, but often you just can't tell. When considering previous results of new treatments there is almost always great uncertainty. Often the data simply do not exist to suggest a new approach is truly promising and you may be unable to determine whether a particular trial is promising or not. Don't expect to be able to come to a definite conclusion about each and every trial – or even most of them. But when there are data suggesting there is real promise, and when you find that data, understand it, and act upon what you find, you ma