CLINICAL TRIALS MYTHS

FOUR COMMON MYTHS ABOUT CLINICAL TRIALS

Myth 1: Clinical trial participants are treated like guinea pigs.

There are strict guidelines in place to help ensure that all patients participating in a clinical trial are treated honestly and ethically. Before any investigational drug can be given to humans, scientists must complete rigorous testing and screening.

Source: NIH

Myth 2: Clinical trials are only for sick people.

Whether you're healthy or sick, young or old, male or female, you're probably eligible to participate in some type of clinical study. Maybe you or a loved one has an illness and you'd like to help scientists find a treatment or cure. If you're healthy, you can help researchers learn more about how the body works or how a medical condition can be prevented.

Clinical research, also known as clinical studies or clinical trials, offers hope for many people, because it helps find better treatments. Clinical trials are at the heart of all medical advances, and volunteer participants are essential to clinical trials.

A patient volunteer – someone with a known health problem – can help researchers better understand, diagnose, treat, or cure that disease or condition.

However, healthy volunteers who have no known major health problems also play an important role in clinical research. They help researchers learn things that may indirectly help volunteers and people they know. Healthy volunteers usually are paid for their participation.

Both types of volunteers are needed, because researchers can learn more about a disease by comparing patient volunteers to healthy volunteers.

Source: NIH

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Myth 3: Clinical trials are expensive.

The costs involved in clinical trials usually are covered by the sponsor. These are known as research costs. Routine medical care that participants are receiving whether they are in the trial or not is their responsibility (or the responsibility of their insurance provider). Many clinical trials compensate healthy participants for their time. Some trials also provide a stipend for travel costs. These details are provided as part of the informed consent process, and you will have an opportunity to learn exactly for what expenses you may be responsible, if any.

Source: National Cancer Institute (NCI)

Myth 4: If I am given a placebo, it's a waste of time.

Clinical trials judge the effectiveness and safety of new interventions by comparing experimental groups (those who receive the intervention) to control groups (those who do not). Most clinical trials are "double-blind" studies, meaning that neither the researcher nor the participant knows who is receiving the intervention.

In studies with healthy participants or when there is no existing treatment for the condition, placebos such as sugar pills are given to the control group. However, in studies involving participants who have a disease, the standard of care (the best available treatment for that condition) serves as the control.

Some studies investigating promising new drugs use a "crossover" design, so that participants who serve as the control group in the first part of the study actually receive the intervention in the second part of the study.

You can ask the research team about the experimental design of the study and whether all participants will have access to new interventions.

Source: NCI