

5 Things Everyone Should Know About Clinical Trials



“Clinical trials are too often feared or misunderstood,”



says **Kimberly Schlesinger, MD**, medical oncologist and Medical Director of the Cancer Institute at University of Maryland St. Joseph Medical Center. “But they are necessary to medical care as we know it. Clinical trials are the only way medicine improves, the only way we move forward in providing life-saving and life-advancing treatment.” According to Dr. Schlesinger, there are five things that every patient should know about clinical trials, to understand their value to both individual care and recovery and to the practice of medicine:

1 There’s nothing to fear.

There’s a lot of fear and misunderstanding surrounding clinical trials regarding concern for patient safety. The truth is, clinical trials are highly regulated by the government and have many, many safeguards in place to protect patients. In fact, there are physicians that devote their entire careers to developing safe, effective clinical trials—it’s an entire branch of medicine.

2 Clinical trials are for virtually everyone.

There’s a common misconception that patients must have a rare or complex disease to take part in a clinical trial, but that’s not the case... There are many, many types of clinical trials in every branch of medicine and for virtually every kind of medical condition (high blood pressure, for instance).

3 Patients can advocate for themselves.

Patients who are interested in participating in a clinical trial should talk with their doctor. It’s not unusual for patients to have gone online to research their cancer—or any type of disease—and then come to me with information about clinical trials they’ve discovered. This gives us a chance to talk through the possible benefits of a clinical trial in relation to their diagnosis and possible treatment options, and these kinds of discussions are always welcome. Talking is the first step in developing a treatment plan that best fits each patient.

4 The benefits of clinical trials for patients can be life changing.

Clinical trial patients often experience an altruistic psychological boost, knowing that their experience has the potential to positively affect humankind. Sometimes, clinical trial participants benefit from financial or other secondary gains through participation incentives...But—most importantly for individual participants—the trials may provide patients access to effective treatments that are not otherwise available to the general public.

5 Clinical trials are more easily accessible than you think.

Virtually every hospital or physician's office offers—or can help patients access—clinical trials. Those trials offered through your local hospital or your doctor are chosen based on the patient population and the more common types of diseases they see.

For more information on clinical trials at UM St. Joseph Medical Center, visit us at umstjoseph.org/clinicaltrials or call 410-337-4569.

