

Barriers and Challenges in Chemoprevention Clinical Trials

1. Why are clinical trials important in chemoprevention research?

Clinical trials are the only way of knowing if chemopreventative agents are safe and effective in humans. Studies show that increased participation in clinical trials may lead to an increase in survival rates. However, only about 3 – 5 % of the 10.1 million adults with cancer participate in cancer clinical trials. Of those, less than 10% of the participants are from underrepresented populations.

2. What are disparities in clinical trials?

Underrepresented populations in clinical trials include people who are low income, elderly, from racial/ethnic minority groups or live in rural areas. Unfortunately, these same populations have differences in the number people that diagnosed with cancer and the number of people that die from cancer. Without adequate representation of these populations, researchers cannot learn about the potential differences in response.

5. What are the barriers for participation?

Patients:

There are many reasons why there is low participation in the underrepresented groups. There is mistrust of clinical research, lack of understanding or awareness of trials, lack of invitation for minority groups, cost/lack of insurance, or transportation issues.

Language or literacy barriers affect participation with study materials such as consent forms. Culturally appropriate information is also necessary to encourage recruitment of racial and ethnic groups.

Doctors:

Sometimes, physicians do not refer patients to clinical trials because they are unaware of the availability or importance of clinical trials. There is also a lack of minority scientists who conduct research on clinical trials. They are important to recruiting minority racial and ethnic populations.

The strictness of study designs and of eligibility criteria is also a barrier for participation. The criteria can exclude the elderly or people who do not speak English.

Public Attitudes:

Research has shown that a majority of cancer patients are unaware that clinical trials are an option, but that 74% would participate if possible. Further, 84% would participate a second time if given the chance, and 76% would recommend clinical trials to another cancer patient. However, those who would not participate held other beliefs, including that they felt that they would be treated “like a guinea pig.”

5. How do you increase participation?

To increase participation, information about clinical trials should be sent to as many people as possible. Special efforts should be taken to recruit underrepresented populations.

Sources:

Intercultural Cancer Council
<http://iccnetwork.org/cancerfacts/ICC-CFS11.pdf>

National Cancer Institute
<http://www.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials/resources/basicworkbook>

Misconceptions and Lack of Awareness Greatly Reduce Recruitment for Cancer Clinical Trials.
Harris Interactive Health Care News. Volume 1, Issue 3.
http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters/healthnews/HI_HealthCareNews2001Vol1_issues3.pdf

Related Resources:

National Cancer Institute
Telephone: 1-800-4-CANCER
Web site: <http://www.cancer.gov>

Baylor College of Medicine
Web site: <http://www.bcm.edu/edict/readingroom.html>