

Understanding Clinical Trials

Patra Grevstad, R.N.

Key Points

The Swedish Cancer Institute has more than 150 clinical trials open to ensure that the most current treatments are available to you.

- Talk to your physician about whether a clinical trial might be right for you
- Participation in a study is voluntary
- Participation involves responsibilities on your part
- Clinical trials are now considered a standard treatment option

What is a Clinical Trial?

A clinical trial is a carefully designed experiment aimed at testing various treatment options in a group of people.

How Do I Gain Access to a Trial?

- Check the clinical trial list in the Swedish Cancer Institute's Cancer Education Center.
- Talk with your doctor to see if a trial is right for you.

What Determines if I Can Participate in a Trial?

Everyone who participates in a trial has to meet the eligibility criteria. It is important for all study participants to have the same characteristics (such as the same type of cancer, for example).

Should I Participate if I am Eligible?

When considering a study, you will go through an informed consent process. This process ensures that you fully understand the procedures of the study. You and your medical team will make this decision together.

What Happens if I Join a Trial?

- You will have regular visits with your physician and research nurse
- You will be asked to adhere to the study treatment calendar
- You may be asked to complete forms about how you are doing
- You may have additional monitoring tests such as X-rays to evaluate your response to treatment
- You will be asked to share your medical history
- You will be carefully monitored for your safety and to avoid harmful side effects

What Questions Should I Ask When Considering a Trial?

- What is the purpose of the study?
- What types of tests will I have to take?
- What can I expect?
- What are the risks and side effects?
- What is the schedule?
- How will my life be affected?
- How long will I participate?
- What are the financial aspects?
- How will I know the treatment is working?
- Will study results be provided?