Rare Disease Clinical Trials

Module 2: Exploring Options with your Patient

Heather Lau, MD
Director, Lysosomal Storage Disease Program
NYU Langone Health

Patient's perceptions of a clinical trial

"When my doctors first recommended I enroll in an experimental clinical trial, which involved a combination of two chemotherapy drugs that I had never heard of, I was skeptical. Well, to be perfectly honest, I was terrified. In my mind, clinical trials were only for the terminally ill — a last resort option, a shot in the dark. The words "experimental" and "trial" conjured up images of mad scientists and guinea pigs."

Jaouad S. Life, Interrupted: A Test of Faith [blog]. *The New York Times.* August 22, 2013

Why do patients enter a trial?

	Major reason	One of the major reasons	Yes, but wasn't really why	Small factor	No, this was not a reason
Help future patients	34%	41%	13%	6%	6%
Improve their QoL	33%	36%	12%	7%	7%
To receive the best care	31%	32%	15%	7%	15%
To receive up-to-date therapy w/ot $$	25%	28%	14%	9%	24%
Extend their life	20%	21%	10%	11%	38%
Follow doctors orders	13%	19%	10%	9%	49%

Wahlstrom-Edwards L, Hess A-M. *Appl Clin Trials.* February 2019. Available at http://www.appliedclinicaltrialsonline.com/patient-perspective-clinical-trials-survey-results-and-industry-implications

The Conversation

Prior to talking with the patient/caregiver

- Do you homework (see module 1)
- Know if a trial is available
- Know if the patient is qualified (or could be qualified)
- Contact the clinical trial lead and discuss the study

Setting up the meeting

- Make the patient feel empowered (they can invite who they want)
- Select a quiet room with no interruptions
- Pen, paper, recording device, water, tissue
- Practice using simplified terminology when describing the study
- Have a list of open ended questions to help stimulate conversation

National Institutes of health (NIH): *Talking to Your Patient About a Clinical Trial*. Accessed July 2019

Explaining drug development and clinical trials

	Participants	Main Purpose
Preclinical	Animals	Does the treatment work as hypothesized?
Phase 1	Healthy volunteers or individuals with a specific disease	Does the treatment work in humans like it did in animals?
Phase 2	Individuals with a specific disease	What is the best dose of the treatment (focus on safety)?
Phase 3	Individuals with a specific disease	Using a specific dose, is the treatment safe and effective?

The Conversation

During the conversation

- Start by reviewing the disease, current treatment options, and then present the option of the clinical trial or expanded access
- Use language the person will understand
- Explain that the clinical trial is voluntary (3x)
- Explain the right to withdraw at any time

Discuss the risks and benefits

- Location
- Time commitment
- Physical commitment
- Control group (if an intervention study)

National Institutes of health (NIH): *Talking to Your Patient About a Clinical Trial*. Accessed July 2019

Be prepared to answer the following question

“If this was your daughter/son/wife/husband, would you advise them to enroll in the study?”

Patients' Concerns

Treatment concerns

- Side effects of the drug
- Number of invasive procedures
- Child taking a drug untested in children
- Number of blood draws
- Perceived risk for physical harm
- Insufficient study benefits
- Consent length and complexity
- Randomized to placebo
- Blinding/not knowing

Greenberg RG et al. *Contemp Clin Trials Commun. 2017;9:7-12.*

Patients' Concerns

Logistic concerns

- Parents' work schedule
- Child's school schedule
- Transportation difficulties
- Compensation for time/travel
- Childcare concerns
- Length of study visits
- Frequency of study visits

Greenberg RG et al. *Contemp Clin Trials Commun. 2017;9:7-12.*

Patients' Concerns

Investigational care costs

- Extra blood draws, radiologic studies, etc.
  - Most trial sponsors will reimburse for these procedures

Routine care costs

- Services normally preformed during standard care
- Health insurance plans may cover this. If not, trial sponsor will most likely pay

Nonmedical costs

- Lodging, travel, meals, dependent care, etc
- Ethical/compliance issues may limit the sponsor's ability to cover these costs
  - Patient advocacy groups may provide assistance

Winkfield KM et al. *J Clin Oncol*. 2018;36: 3331-3339.

Other Concerns

The control group

- Nobody wants to be in the control group

Randomization

- Some may have a difficult time understanding this concept and/or think it is unfair

Blinding

- Social media and the small rare disease community can make this difficult

Winkfield KM et al. *J Clin Oncol*. 2018;36: 3331-3339.

Care Team's Concerns

Survey[1] of 207 oncologists concerned about:

- Extra paperwork (77%)
- Patient education (54%)
- Extended follow-up or clinic visits (53%)

- **Survey[2] of 136 pediatricians concerned about:**
  - Time for patient education (89%)
  - Distance to the clinical trial site (86%)

1. Mahmud A, et al. *Curr Oncol. 2018;25:119-125.*
2. Greenberg RG, et al. *Contemp Clin Trials Commun. 2017;9:7-12*

Care Team's Experience: Online Survey

	Clinicians (n = 518)	Nurses (n = 1744)
Received clinical research training in school	40%	45%
Familiar with clinical research process	88%	69%
Comfortable providing clinical trial information with patients	91%	63%
Comfortable discussing clinical trial information with patients	91%	72%

Gerz KA. *Clin Therap. 2017;39:2203-2213.*

Rule #1: Make Sure the Patient Understands

During the conversation

- Start by explaining the disease, current treatment options, and then present the option of the clinical trial or expanded access.
- Use the informed consent documents to steer the conversation (if appropriate)
- Explain that the clinical trial is voluntary (3x)
- Explain the right to withdraw at any time

Quotable quote

- *"I know English is your first language but clinical trial jargon is nobody's first language." (Anonymous)*

National Institutes of health (NIH): *Talking to Your Patient About a Clinical Trial*. Accessed July 2019

Rule #2: Listen to the Patient

Side Effects

- *"I think that my health is in a situation where I needed to have something as predictable as possible, or as effective and predictable as possible."*

Randomization

- *"And then the random picking, you know . . . it sounds like you're picking numbers or lottery numbers or stuff. I didn't really like that part, that you don't pick what you want, a machine or computer picks what you're going to get; I didn't really like that."*

Overwhelmed

- *"Because like I said, initially coming in, everything is new, all this information; I had information overload, my brain was about to combust, and it was just too much."*

Brown RF, et al. *J Oncol Pract*. 2013; 9: 287-293.

Be prepared to support the patient's decision

Clinical trials are key to expanding our knowledge about rare diseases. But, clinical trials are not always the best option for a particular patient or something they are comfortable being involved in. Listen to the patient and guide them on the path they choose.

Summary

- Do your homework
- Explain the clinical study using simple language in a non-authorative manner
- Goal of the clinician is to support the patient’s decision
- Understand the person’s concerns about entering a clinical study
- Know that not all clinical studies are interventional studies