

# Clinical Trials at Upper Valley Medical Center



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Over 555,550 people in the United States are expected to die of cancer each year – an average of more than 1,500 people a day. As the second leading cause of death after heart disease, cancer accounts for one in four deaths each year. Scientific research continues to provide valuable insights into the causes of cancer.

Because research is an

incremental process, it moves forward in carefully planned steps. Only after treatments or techniques prove successful in animals can they be evaluated in people through clinical trials. Participation in National Cancer Institute (NCI) sponsored trials is an option that is available to cancer patients at Upper Valley Medical Center (UVMC) through the Dayton Clinical Oncology Program (DCOP). Currently at UVMC we have 35 patients who are being followed either actively, or long term. Each clinical trial before being offered through DCOP is scrutinized by an Institutional Review Board from Wright State University.

Clinical trials are designed to answer specific questions about the effects of a therapy or technique designed to improve human health. The trials are planned in advance, follow a rigorous scientific process, and the findings are analysed. The scientific process has built in safeguards for participants, who are carefully selected according to eligibility requirements given for each trial. Clinical trials are a critical part of the research process. By evaluating the results of these trials, we can find better ways to prevent, detect, and treat cancer. Only 3 percent of adults participate in clinical trials, compared to approximately 60 percent of children diagnosed with cancer.

Clinical trials differ by type and phase, but they all involve scientific testing. Each trial attempts to answer different research questions.

- Prevention trials: What kinds of interventions can prevent cancer from occurring?

- Screening and early detection trials: What tests can find cancer as early as possible in healthy people?

- Diagnostic trials: How can new tests or procedures identify a suspected cancer earlier or more accurately?

- Genetics trials: Can gene-transfer therapy be used to treat cancer?

- Treatment trials: What new interventions (e.g. drugs, biologics, surgical procedures, and radiation) can help people who have cancer?

- Quality-of life and supportive care trials: What kinds of interventions can improve the comfort and quality of life of people who have cancer?

Clinical trials occur in four phases. Each attempt to answer a different question similar to the types of research trials do:

Phase 1: How does the treatment affect the human body? How should the treatment be given? What dose is safe?

Phase 2: Does the treatment do what it is supposed to do for a particular cancer? How does the treatment affect the body?

Phase 3: Is the new treatment (or new use of treatment) better than the current practice?

Phase 4: What are the effects of an approved treatment?

We know and understand that most people understand very little about clinical trials. National Cancer Institute (NCI) research has shown that the general public is either unaware of clinical trials as a treatment / prevention option or misinformed about the clinical trial process. There are many reasons for this lack of understanding, and there are no simple answers to address it. Patients that do consent to be a part of the clinical trials process are followed very closely during treatment. Patient safety is of the utmost importance more so than any results that the trial may provide for future research. As a matter of fact, participants in a clinical trial may at any time stop their participation within the trial. For more information on the clinical trials that are available at UVMC or to refer a patient for involvement in a study, please contact Andrea Smalls, RN, BSN, at (937) 440-4822.