Starting the Conversation:

Talking With Your Doctor About Clinical Trials

PANCREATIC CANCER NORTH AMERICA

Clinical trials may offer new treatment options, but it can be hard to know how to bring them up with your doctor or care team. This handout is designed to help you start the conversation, choose the right questions to ask, and feel confident exploring your options. Beginning this discussion early in your treatment journey can help you and your care team make informed decisions together.

Questions to Help Start the Conversation

You don't need to know all the details before asking about clinical trials. Showing interest is a great first step. Here are a few simple ways to begin:

- I am interested in clinical trials and want to learn more about whether they might be an option for me.
- Should clinical trials be something I consider now, or later?
- What are all my treatment options moving forward, including research studies or trials?
- If I join a trial, how would my care be coordinated with you and my care team?

Follow-up Questions

Once the conversation has started, these questions can help you gather more detailed information:

- How would a clinical trial work in my situation, and how do you decide if a trial is appropriate for me?
- Are there any trials that might be a good fit for me?
- What tests are needed to determine eligibility, and how long do they take?
- What are the potential benefits and risks of joining a trial?
- Are any trials available locally, or would I need to travel or be referred elsewhere?
- Will participation affect my insurance coverage or costs?
- Who can help me learn more, and what's the best way to follow up if I want to look into this further?

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Tips for the Conversation

- Bring a notebook or a support person. You can take notes yourself or ask your support person to help by listening and capturing key points.
- Be open about your goals. For example: “We want to explore every option,” or “We want to understand whether clinical trials could offer added benefits.”
- It’s okay to take time to think. It is completely reasonable to say, “Can we take a few days to think this over and follow up if we have more questions?”
- Not all doctors are familiar with every clinical trial. Trials have specific eligibility criteria, and your doctor may not know about each one. If that’s the case, ask how you can connect with a research or trial team for more information.

Preparing for Appointments

- Write down any questions or concerns you have about standard treatment options versus clinical trials.
- Note any trials or research you’ve found so your doctor or care team can review them with you.
- Asking about clinical trials doesn’t mean you’re committing to one. It’s simply a way to explore all your treatment options and understand their potential benefits.
- Discussing clinical trials is an important part of advocating for your care, and your healthcare provider is there to guide and support you throughout the process.

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Pancreatic Support Hub

We know you have lots of questions, which is why we created our Ask An Expert service. We have a team of medical specialists ready to answer questions between your doctor’s appointments and provide information to help patients and families make informed decisions about care and treatment options for this disease. This service is free to use and available no matter your location.

Learn more on our website:
https://www.pancreaticcancernorthamerica.ca/pancreatic-support-hub