Cancer Institute NSW

Clinical Trials glossary of most used terms

There are many new words when learning about clinical trials. Some of these words are defined below.

Speak to your doctor about any words you don't understand.

Blinding or Masking: A strategy in which you or the healthcare team do not know which treatment you will receive. Blinding ensure results of the clinical trial are not influenced by other factors.

Comparison treatment: Treatment or care that is already in use as standard treatment and will be compared to the trial treatment.

Consent Form: A document that explains the clinical trial. It is not a legal contract. It helps you to understand what participating in the trial involves. Also known as Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form.

Enrolment: The time when your participation in the trial is confirmed.

Group: Some trials divide people into different groups to be studied. Each group receives a different treatment or care. A trial may have one group or many groups. A group in a trial is also known as an 'arm'.

Human Research and Ethics Committee (HREC): A group of people (scientists, doctors and members of the community) who review, approve and monitor all research involving people. This is to protect the safety of all participants in the trial.

Eligibility criteria: A set of requirements that you must meet to participate in a clinical trial. For example, being in a certain age group or having a certain type of cancer.

Intervention: The treatment or care being studied in a clinical trial, for example, a new type of surgery.

Investigator: The doctor managing the clinical trial at the hospital or clinic.

Placebo: A look-alike product with no active ingredient. Placebo is compared to the trial intervention to see which one works better. Not all trials use a placebo.

Protocol: The document that explains all the aspects of a clinical trial, including how it will be conducted and how results will be published.

Randomisation: A way to decide which group in a trial you will be in. It is usually done by a computer program. In a randomised trial, you or the doctor cannot decide which treatment you will receive.

Side effect: A change or an event you might experience during or after the clinical trial. A side effect may or may not be related to the clinical trial.

Sponsor: The organisation or person who oversees, and sometimes fund the clinical trial. Clinical trials can be sponsored by drug companies, universities or not-for-profit organisations, such as a group of researchers.

More information

See the Cancer Institute NSW website cancer.nsw.gov.au/participating-in-clinical-trials

Interpreter

For all discussions about clinical trials, you have the right to an interpreter at no cost to you. Call TIS (Translating and Interpreting Service) on 131 450.

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