UNDERSTANDING THE CRITICAL ROLE OF CLINICAL TRIAL NURSES

- Clinical trial nurses play many vital roles in the care of their patients, including that of caregiver, communicator, educator, and advocate.
- They are the healthcare professionals with the most interpersonal contact with the patient.
- They serve as a conduit for dissemination and coordination of information between patients and the healthcare team.
- They must be understanding and empathetic to the unique needs, challenges, and viewpoints of patients throughout the disease continuum, from diagnosis through survivorship.

HCP-RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE ABOUT CLINICAL TRIALS

- **Use a structured approach.** Communicate with potential trial participants in a structured manner. Consider the Four Habits Model: invest in the beginning, elicit the patient’s perspective, demonstrate empathy, and invest in the end.
- **Address common barriers.** Barriers to effective communication include language differences, low health literacy, cultural beliefs, and mistrust. Strategies to overcome these barriers may include plain language, teach-back method, cultural competence, and transparency.
- **Provide clear and accurate information.** Explain the trial accurately: the purpose, procedures, risks, benefits, alternatives, and rights of the participants. Consider visual aids to improve comprehension.
- **Assess patient understanding and readiness.** Assess a patient’s readiness and understanding to give informed consent to a trial with communication techniques such as open-ended questions, reflective listening, and motivational interviewing.

DISCUSSING CLINICAL TRIALS WITH PATIENTS

1. **Explain the Purpose of Clinical Trials.** Discuss how clinical trials are research studies with patients.
2. **Discuss the Benefits and Risks.** Educate patients about the possible risks of the therapy being studied. Also discuss the potential benefits, such as access to new treatments before they are widely available.
3. **Provide Alternatives.** Consider what other options for treatment are available. This helps the patient make an informed decision about whether to participate in the trial.
4. **Discuss Informed Consent.** Help patients understand the informed consent process, and comprehend how the research treatment differs from the standard-of-care treatment.
5. **Address Concerns.** Help patients overcome the commonly reported fears of randomization, of receiving a placebo, and of potential adverse effects.
6. **Discuss the Practical Aspects.** Patients may need to speak with the research team and their insurance to learn whether treatment will be covered. Be able to refer patients to support resources.

TIP

"Research nurses can play an extremely pivotal role in ensuring that we’re not only at point-of-consent educating, but way before that, getting involved in pre-screening activities in order to ensure that we’re looking at a diverse population." - RuthAnn Gordon, MSN, RN, FNP-BC, OCN

TIP

"How can we harness all of our resources to provide the best care to a patient? Clinical trials are one of them. Clinical trials will offer support so that the patient can have access to a pharmacist, a social worker, a dedicated nurse, a dedicated line to call if they’re having a symptom." - Beth Faiman PhD, MSN, APN-BC, BMTCN, AOCN, FAAN, FAPO

TIP

"I tell all of my nurses, nurse practitioners, even physicians, just ask a patient. Don’t think that because they live an hour away, they’re not going to want to participate in a well-designed clinical trial without even asking them." Beth Faiman PhD, MSN, APN-BC, BMTCN, AOCN, FAAN, FAPO

TIP

"I think one of the most important things about when to talk to the patient is every time, anytime, right? And introducing that upfront I think is really important so that we don’t leave clinical trials sort of as a last thought and the patient have that feeling." RuthAnn Gordon, MSN, RN, FNP-BC, OCN