

Think About Participating in a Clinical Trial

Patient: Eugene
Age: 64

“In March of 2002 I went to my primary care physician for my yearly physical feeling ‘fit as a fiddle.’ I had joined a local gym and was exercising with weights and walking two miles a day. During my exam my physician thought that my spleen felt enlarged and asked me to have a scan. Three days later I learned that I had kidney cancer with metastasis. My family and I were in total shock. How could someone who feels so good be so sick? My primary physician advised me to get my things in order. He didn’t advise surgery or even chemotherapy because the cancer was so advanced. But after consultation with a surgeon I opted for aggressive treatment. My nephrectomy went smoothly and my surgeon told me I would now be a good candidate for a clinical trial.

Within six weeks from my surgery date I was offered a clinical trial with high dose Interleukin and Peg-Intron injections. My wife learned how to give me injections three times a week and we were able to complete my treatment at home. The treatment was difficult, but it held my cancer stable for eighteen months. I then entered into the Phase III trial with one of the new drugs for kidney cancer that has since been approved by the FDA. My wife and I were nervous because this was to be a “blind” trial. The thought of not knowing if I was getting the drug and the possibility of my cancer progressing was unnerving but the doctor explained that I would be scanned in six weeks and if my cancer was worse I could withdraw from the trial. Anyone who enters a clinical trial has the option of terminating their participation due to progression of their disease or inability to tolerate side effects. I took two pills a day with few side effects and within six weeks my scans showed that my tumors had shrunk. My wife said she had to remind herself that I was a kidney cancer patient in chemotherapy.

Once again the trial drug held my cancer in check for many months until slight growth was detected again. After eighteen months my doctor offered me another trial which I am gladly participating in now. And I am once again getting response. Some tumors disappeared and others have shrunk.

I can truthfully say that these clinical trials have given me another chance with a good quality of life. I am a firm believer in clinical trials and told my doctor that I would gladly participate in any clinical trial he recommended. I strongly encourage cancer patients who are eligible to participate in clinical trials. Keep a positive attitude and don’t surrender.”