

Bringing the Next Generation of Cancer Care to the Commonwealth: *Clinical Trials at the University of Virginia's Cancer Center*

The horizon for cancer care is truly exciting. Tremendous scientific advances are being made toward understanding cancer—advances that promise great hope for a new generation of highly targeted and more effective treatments.

Clinical trials are the final proving ground for new cancer treatments. Without trials there would be no new therapies, and the University of Virginia Cancer Center is an active participant.

“Our goal is to ensure that no Virginian need leave the state to enroll in a clinical trial,” says Paula Fracasso, M.D., Ph.D., deputy director of the UVA Cancer Center.

In addition to providing crucial knowledge about which compounds or therapeutic approaches may be most effective, clinical trials offer important options for individuals battling cancer. For some, a trial may be the best hope for having more time with family and friends. For others, a trial may offer a treatment regimen that provides equal or better results with fewer side-effects.

The Process

There are three clinical trial phases through which a new drug must pass:

- Phase I trials test for safety, assess side-effects, and help determine appropriate dosing levels.
- Phase II trials test the effectiveness of a drug.
- Phase III trials compare a new drug against the best treatment currently available.

A Phase I study may have only 15 or 20 participants, while Phase II studies may have hundreds, and Phase III, thousands. Large clinical trials are

performed at multiple sites and are sponsored by the National Cancer Institute or pharmaceutical companies.

Expanding Our Reach

While promising new drugs are being developed in laboratories at record pace, there are significant challenges facing the system

that tests them in people. Among the most pressing issues are patients' lack of knowledge about clinical trials and insufficient funding from governmental sources to expand the number and scope of trials available to the patients who need them most.

It's imperative that we increase our capacity to test therapies developed at UVA and elsewhere.

Only three percent of adults with cancer participate in clinical trials, and federal reimbursements cover only a fraction of the cost of the trials themselves. Philanthropy has become a crucial component of financing clinical trials, ensuring that promising new therapies benefit patients. With cooperation among researchers in dozens of fields, we can hasten the search for more effective ways to prevent, treat, and cure cancer.

If you wish to help the UVA Cancer Center ensure that no Virginian need leave the Commonwealth to participate in a clinical trial, please contact Scott Karr at 434-982-6314.

