PIP Digest

CCRA ACRC Canadian Cancer Research Alliance
Alliance canadienne pour la recherche sur le cancer

PIP PPP Patient Involvement in Cancer Research Program
Programme de Participation des Patients à la recherche sur le cancer

CLINICAL TRIALS: Finding a Clinical Trial

In this PIP Digest, we describe how you can find information about trials that may be relevant to you or your loved ones.

Key Concepts

- Finding a clinical trial online
- Identifying trials with specific characteristics

Related PIP Digests

- Cancer Research: What is a Clinical Trial?
- Clinical Trials: Precision Medicine and Clinical Trials

Please note that this information should not be used in place of advice from a medical professional.

If you are thinking about joining a clinical trial as a treatment option, the best place to start is by talking with your doctor or another healthcare professional. Your doctor may know about a suitable clinical trial or can investigate current trials and provide you with information and answers to help you decide if a clinical trial is right for you. Even with research, however, your doctor may not be aware of every clinical trial that could be an option.

You can also search for clinical trials yourself, although it does take practice. ClinicalTrials.gov (https://clinicaltrials.gov/) is a free service of the U.S. National Institutes of Health, maintained by the U.S. National Library of Medicine. It is one of the most comprehensive websites of trials and contains trials from all over the world, and it is often used as a source for other trials databases. A modernization process was recently completed to make this trial portfolio even easier for users.

Information on ClinicalTrials.gov is provided and updated by the trial sponsors or principal investigators. Each record includes a summary of the study protocol, including the purpose, recruitment status, and eligibility criteria. Study locations and specific contact information are listed to assist with enrolment. Trial descriptions are very technical and may require interpretation by a medical professional.

If you are considering participating in a clinical trial, knowing the details of your cancer diagnosis will help to determine whether you meet the trial conditions or eligibility criteria. The full medical name of your cancer, where it started, its current location and status, the cell type and stage, any cancers you've had before, the details of your previous cancer treatments, and any other health issues are all important details needed to determine if a trial is right for you.

Quick Tips for Finding Trials on ClinicalTrials.gov

1. Going to ClinicalTrials.gov, will take you to the **Focus Your Search** landing page.
2. Under **Condition**, enter the specific information about your cancer. This will generate a submenu of cancer subtypes and various stages. You can select a specific stage, if that is relevant, or stick with the more general term. There is also a glossary attached to this field for additional information.
3. If there is a specific intervention/treatment that you are looking for, specify it in the **Intervention/Treatment** field. There is also a submenu automatically generated for this field and a glossary attached.
4. Under **Locations,** select Canada and you will be prompted to select from the menu generated. Add a specific province or city if you would like to narrow your search.
5. Under **Study Status**, select "Recruiting and not yet recruiting studies." This will give you a list of trials that are or will be actively looking for participants.
6. Under **More Filters**, you can add specific criteria such as your age/age group and/or sex to help narrow the search.
7. If you are interested in a specific trial phase — let's say, Phase II trials — you can tick off this box under **Study Phase**.
8. Run your search query to generate a list of trials that meet your selected criteria.

Once the list of trials has been generated, click on an individual trial to access its details. Each trial will have a summary, information on related start/end dates, and information on trial contacts and locations.

Participation criteria identifies the inclusion and exclusion criteria used in selecting trial participants. Often these descriptions are written in technical language. You may need a healthcare professional to help decipher this information and assess if you (or a loved one) would qualify for the trial.

Resources that may be valuable in using ClinicalTrials.gov are as follows:

- How to Search for Clinical Studies - https://clinicaltrials.gov/find-studies/how-to-search
- How to Read a Study Record - https://clinicaltrials.gov/study-basics/learn-about-studies
- ClinicalTrials.gov Glossary Terms - https://clinicaltrials.gov/study-basics/glossary

It is important to note that although all clinical trials are required to be registered, there is some evidence to suggest that not all are entered in online portals before they are started. There are several international initiatives to improve trial quality and trial reporting:

- SPIRIT (Standard Protocol Items: Recommendations for Interventional Trials (https://www.spirit-statement.org/) is an international initiative aimed at improving the quality of clinical trial protocols by defining and standardizing an evidence-based set of items to address in a protocol.
- All Trials.net (https://www.alltrials.net/) advocates for clinical research to adopt the principles of open research. Under the guiding principle, "All trials registered, all results reported," the project pushes for the registration of all clinical trials and for the open, shared reporting of all trial results.

- The CONSORT Statement (https://www.equator-network.org/reporting-guidelines/consort/) outlines minimum evidence-based recommendations for reporting randomized trials. These guidelines help researchers reports on concluded trial findings in a standardized, complete, and transparent way.

Other Resources

As a starting point, you may also want to check resources available on websites within your jurisdiction or relevant advocacy groups or charities. Some organizations curate lists of clinical trials specific to the cancer patients they serve. Drug companies may also have databases of trials that they fund. In addition, the organizations listed below all have resources for patients on their websites, which may be useful in your understanding of clinical trials.

Canadian Cancer Clinical Trials Network

Canadian Cancer Clinical Trials Network (3CTN) is a pan-Canadian initiative to improve the efficiency and quality of academic clinical cancer trials. It supports and coordinates a network of teams at cancer treatment centres and hospitals, helping to increase their capacity and capability to conduct academic trials. See https://3ctn.ca/. 3CTN also offers a trial finder of active cancer trials with a precision medicine focus. See https://3ctn.ca/canadian-precision-oncology-trial-finder/

Canadian Cancer Trials Group
A national program of the Canadian Cancer Society

Canadian Cancer Trials Group (CCTG) is a cooperative oncology group that designs and administers clinical trials in cancer therapy, supportive care, and prevention across Canada. It supports a collaborative network of researchers, physicians, scientists, and statisticians from across Canada and partners with groups across the world. CCTG's Central Operations and Statistics Office is located at the Cancer Research Institute of Queen's University. See https://www.ctg.queensu.ca.

N2 NETWORK OF NETWORKS
RÉSEAU DES RÉSEAUX

N2 Network of Networks is a not-for-profit incorporated organization and an alliance of Canadian research networks and organizations working to enhance national clinical research capability and capacity. N2 brings together trialists and clinical research professionals from across the country, providing a common platform for sharing best practices, resources, and research-related content to ensure efficient and high-quality research, integrity of clinical practices and accountability. See https://n2canada.ca.