



Patient Power

CLL Clinical Trial Candidacy: Finding a Suitable Trial

Nicole Lamanna, MD
Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine
Columbia University Medical Center

Please remember the opinions expressed on Patient Power are not necessarily the views of our sponsors, contributors, partners or Patient Power. Our discussions are not a substitute for seeking medical advice or care from your own doctor. That's how you'll get care that's most appropriate for you.

Jeff Folloder:

Dr. Lamanna, can—are most CLL patients good candidates for clinical trials?

Dr. Lamanna:

That's a trickier question. There—you know, I think—first of all, it's important that not every trial is right for every person, so I think that everybody needs to know that. There are clinical trials that might be suitable for you, but there are clinical trials that may not be suitable for you, and that's where the importance of the relationship and the trust with your physician could help guide you into what may be suitable for your disease. There are, depending upon your disease characteristics, there may be better therapies, and so some of them will be in the context of a clinical trial, and some may not. And so, that has to be, again, individualized. Now, do I think that most people—obviously, I think all of us, who do research in this disease want—the hopes are these therapies that have gotten approved have gotten approved because we've done the work to find these new therapies.

And, patients have donated their time, energy, their lives, to be on these clinical trials, and now, made these drugs available for everybody. So, certainly, to advance these fields are in the context of clinical trials, and so, we're obviously always advocating that folks with rare diseases should be on clinical trials, of course. But, there are obviously individuals where the clinical trials may have different characteristics. Some of your other medical problems may not make you appropriate for certain clinical trials. Might be your kidney function, it might be some other reason. And so, there are criteria, to be on certain clinical trials. And so, we have to look at that, too. It may be inconvenient—it may not be possible for you to be on a clinical trial. You're taking care of a loved one, and you know, some of these clinical trials require you to be at the clinic maybe weekly, maybe—whatever the schedule may be.

So, it is not appropriate for everybody, and so you have to factor in your lifestyle, your disease characteristics, and of course, whether or not that trial or that therapy is appropriate for you. And so, there is a lot that goes into the clinical trials. I kinda say, we're like underdogs, because running these clinical trials are labor-intensive, not just for the patients, but for the staff. And for the physicians, and for those of us who are investing, because we think that, you know, obviously, to advance the field, and to find curative therapies for this disease, this is what we need to do to get there. But, it's a lot of work for everybody.

Jeff Folloder:

Can a person be a part of a clinical trial, if they're not at a major research center? Can it be remote controlled?

Dr. Lamanna:

So, there are some things that could be survey-based, and yes. Others can be blood-based. So, let's say you don't even need therapy. So, this is another thing that we talk about. So, in your watch and wait period, or even throughout the years, whether you've gotten treatment, and are back on watch and wait.

The beautiful thing about this disease, or studying this disease, is that we can study it from your peripheral blood. So, donating your cells is always a good thing, too. If you're willing to – because certainly, what we do is, as Michael said, he's got 20,000 or how many samples, stored here, and each of us, at our own institutions, have these—what we call these tissue repositories. So, we take blood, or bone marrow samples, or if you've had a lymph node biopsy, we may take extra of those tissue samples, store them, because we can go back, and then look at different features. As we learn about the disease, we might even be able to then go back and study different factors as we learn more, or even study prospectively. And so, those are just donation of samples.

So, there are ways to do them, although, depending upon, if you're not at an academic institution, or as you said, in a center that does this, it depends on whether or not those—where you are can be shipped to a place that can do that, but you know, that may be a little logistically hard, or of you pay a visit to a CLL specialist, then that can be done at the time you're doing that.

Please remember the opinions expressed on Patient Power are not necessarily the views of our sponsors, contributors, partners or Patient Power. Our discussions are not a substitute for seeking medical advice or care from your own doctor. That's how you'll get care that's most appropriate for you.