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Clinical Trials awareness can lead to inventing new drugs or therapies

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The entire world is looking forward the outcome of clinical trial of drugs, vaccine and therapy to treat COVID-19. Drug companies and medical researchers are making heroic efforts to deliver new medicines or therapies. Several dozen are now in development. Doctors on the front lines have been trying older medicines for repurposing and repositioning. Different studies of such medicines are already ongoing across the world. Now we are sure that all of us can understand the activities on clinical research and trial is not a choice for us as any of the vaccine or drug cannot come into market without clinical trials.

One of the most important challenges of conducting clinical trials in our country is getting participants or patients in clinical trials and lack of awareness about clinical trials is a big reason for this lesser patient participation in India. Most of the patients are not aware about clinical trials at all, and many of them don't know how to get involved in this process and many are not aware of the benefits of enrolling in a clinical trial. By taking part in clinical trials, patients not only help other patients by facilitating drug development, but may also save several lives including their own. The patients get access to the newest drugs and treatments via clinical trials only and most of the times at a cost that is more affordable compared to when they have to purchase the drug for their treatment. Moreover, they get the highest level of expertise and utmost care with a new treatment that complements the current standard of treatment.

Scared of being treated as a guinea pig and getting a placebo is the most common factor that pulls patients away from clinical trials. However, it is important for patients to understand that clinical trials usually run parallel to their regular clinical care.

Moreover, most of the times the trials are designed such that the patients would be allowed to cross over to the experimental drug, in case their disease continue to progress.People are having fear in their mind whether the new therapy will work to improve their health or worsen their disease. However, unlike old times, currently participant's right is protected by regulatory bodies like the Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC) and the trials are designed to minimize any adverse effects (AEs) to participants.

Cost of treatment is a big factor for patients while considering to get involved in a trial. Many studies may ask patients to partially pay for the new therapy or tests involved, but most of the time treatments are free for participants in clinical trial. Some trials even pay the participants for enrolling in a trial. Apart from the cost, many patients may not be sure of the time commitment they would need to visit trial sites for repeated assessments or follow-ups. Most trials require patients to visit multiple times and each visit may be 5-6 hours long.

Here, we are talking about people with life threatening diseases, and we are asking them to try a new experimental drug. So, we should first of all educate them and involve them in the decision-making process. The stakeholders of the research and drug development industry must understand the fears patients harbor, and work toward educating more and more patients to clear their misconceptions, so as to build up an environment where the patients have easy access to updated information and feel more involved in their treatment decisions right from the beginning.

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