



spotlight on health

Clinical Trial Participation Offers Benefits To Lung Cancer Patients: One Man's Story

(NAPSA)—Although five years ago doctors diagnosed Jim Curtis with inoperable lung cancer and he was told that he had six months to live, today, Curtis is healthy and his cancer is in remission, allowing him to work full-time at the event-planning company he and his wife Teresa founded. If you were to ask him why he is still alive, he would tell you it is because of his participation in a clinical trial.

Before the Memorial Day weekend in 2001, Curtis began coughing up blood. The alarming symptom prompted him to visit the emergency room in his hometown of Charlestown, W. Va., where he underwent several diagnostic tests. The next day Curtis's physician delivered the fatal diagnosis over the phone: He had Stage IV non-small cell lung cancer. "I was alone when I received the news and became completely distraught," Jim explains.

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States. According to the Lung Cancer Alliance (LCA), over 50 percent of new lung cancer cases will be diagnosed at a very late stage—Stage IIIb or IV—and unfortunately, only 5 percent of those diagnosed will live for five years. As with all cancers, treatment options vary with the stage of development of the disease. Jim was prescribed the standard treatment regimen for his stage of lung cancer, which is radiation and chemotherapy.

Frustrated and frightened by the statistics, Jim began researching his disease and all of the various treatment options. He was surprised to learn that the standard therapy for lung cancer was

The Lung Cancer Alliance says half of new lung cancer cases are diagnosed at a very late stage. Cutting-edge treatments are available through clinical trial participation. Clinical trials are medical research studies that can benefit lung cancer patients with few other options.



not always the treatment of choice, and that by beginning this course of therapy immediately he could possibly be limiting his options for receiving more promising, cutting-edge treatments available only through clinical trial participation. Clinical trials, Curtis discovered, are medical research studies that can potentially offer benefits for lung cancer patients who have few standard treatment options to choose from. "I was shocked that this was not discussed with me at the time of my diagnosis," explains Jim.

Determined to live an active and full life and receive the best available treatment, Curtis decided to investigate ongoing lung cancer clinical trials further. He sought to educate himself on the risks and benefits of trial participation. "I found that there was a wealth of information and that in order to make an informed decision, I had to take an active role in my treatment decision-making process."

Curtis is not alone in his interest in clinical trial participation. In fact, a recent AstraZeneca-supported survey released by the LCA showed that 80 percent of cancer patients were unaware of available and appropriate clinical trials. And at the time they were exploring treatment options, 77 percent of patients indicated they

would be very or somewhat interested in participating in a clinical trial—if they still required treatment and a new drug was being developed. While patients expressed concerns and hesitations about participating in clinical studies, they did report that they would be interested if they had all the appropriate information regarding them.

Shortly after researching appropriate clinical studies, Curtis sought treatment through a double-blind, randomized lung cancer clinical trial taking place at a major university in Knoxville, Tennessee—about 315 miles from his home. He and his wife drove the long distance every three weeks so that he could receive his treatment, and although the trip was arduous, they both agreed that the excellent quality of care received as a clinical trial participant far outweighed any inconvenience.

Curtis's tumor started to shrink immediately and is now undetectable. Five years after his "so-called fatal diagnosis," Curtis remains active. He volunteers for LCA's Phone Buddy Program, a peer-to-peer resource that matches lung cancer survivors, caregivers and family members with others experiencing similar situations.

Curtis is dedicated to raising awareness about the potential benefits of lung cancer clinical trials and urges patients to discuss available trials with their physicians. For further assistance in locating an appropriate lung cancer clinical trial, contact the Lung Cancer Alliance clinical trials matching service toll-free hotline at (800) 698-0931 or on the Internet at www.lungcanceralliance.org/clinicaltrials.html.