



# spotlight on health

## Clinical Trials: How You Make A Difference

(NAPSA)—Many Americans may not realize it, but many of the treatments that save lives today are based on yesterday's clinical trials. Diseases that we are only aware of by name, such as smallpox and polio, have been eliminated because of medical research and testing. Advances in hypertension, diabetes and cancer have been powered by everyday people participating in clinical trials.

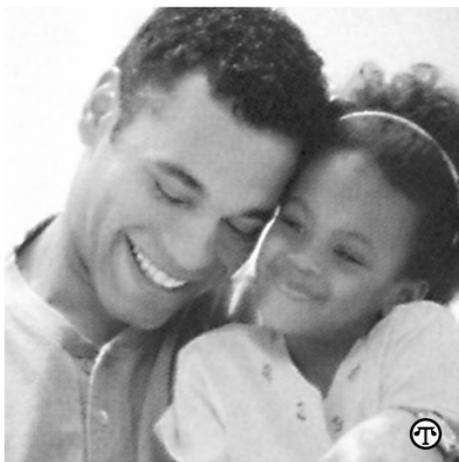
### What Is A Clinical Trial?

A clinical trial is a process that seeks to answer specific questions with the goal of finding better ways to prevent, screen for, make diagnosis of or treat a disease. This process studies or tests in humans a new procedure (knee replacement), a drug (aspirin), a vaccine (HPV vaccine) or a device (MRI).

Clinical trials are important because they are how scientists can research ways to improve your health and quality of life. They can range from examining the effect of exercise on reducing blood pressure to determining if estrogen can prevent memory loss and Alzheimer's disease in women with a family history of Alzheimer's.

Clinical trials can prove to be crucial in changing lives. For example, a few years ago, leukemia killed nearly every child who developed it. Now, thanks to clinical trials, most of the children with the disease are living and thriving.

Clinical trials are particularly important to minorities because some minorities and/or women develop serious illnesses such as heart disease, prostate cancer and diabetes more often than do other Americans. African Americans suffer from more complications



**If you have family and friends who have survived serious illnesses, they may have benefited from discoveries found in clinical trials.**

and, in some instances, die earlier from many of the diseases just mentioned.

### Should You Join A Clinical Trial?

Scientists need to find ways to reduce or eliminate these disparities of high disease rates in minority communities. Increased participation by minorities and women in clinical trials may be a part of the answer. According to Dr. James Lane, a member of Project I.M.P.A.C.T., "It's important that African Americans participate in clinical trials so that we can discover what works best on us. If we're not participating, then all of the observations are based upon looking at the white population."

Today's clinical trials are designed to ensure the safety of the volunteer.

To find out more about clinical trials, call the National Medical Association (202-347-1895) and ask for a copy of the "You've Got the Power!" clinical trials booklet, or visit [www.NMANet.org](http://www.NMANet.org).