



HEALTH AWARENESS

Getting Involved In Clinical Research

(NAPSA)—Gene Gary-Williams signed up for a clinical research study several years ago. Why? “African-American people in general have not been involved in many of the medical studies,” she explains. “As women of color, we need to participate so that we can provide information researchers would not be able to get otherwise.”

Are you playing your part in clinical research? Doctors and scientists are conducting clinical studies (also known as clinical trials) in every state of the union. They’re looking for volunteers of all ages. They need people from all cultures and with different lifestyles. With your help, they may find ways to improve the health of hundreds, thousands or millions of people.

Clinical studies can be sponsored by foundations, medical institutions, drug companies and federal agencies such as the National Institutes of Health. They can be conducted at hospitals, universities, doctors’ offices and community clinics.

The idea for a study often begins in a research lab, hospital or clinic. After a new therapy or procedure is developed in the lab, it’s tested in animal studies. The most promising treatments then move into clinical trials.

All clinical studies have guidelines about who can participate. These can include age or gender. In some cases, people must have a certain type or stage of disease. These criteria aren’t personal. They’re used to ensure that researchers enroll the people who can help them answer specific medical questions.

Two types of volunteers are needed for clinical research. People with no known major health problems are called healthy volunteers. Patient volunteers, on the



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other hand, have a known health problem. Clinical studies are designed to help researchers better understand, diagnose, treat or cure a disease or condition. Researchers can learn more about the disease process by comparing patient volunteers to healthy volunteers, so both are needed.

After a study is completed, the researchers carefully examine the information they’ve collected. Their results are often published in scientific journals. If the new approach has been proven safe and effective, it may become standard medical practice.

Many people might benefit if you get involved in clinical research: your relatives, your friends and even you. Talk to your doctor or visit <http://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2007/June/index.htm> to learn more.

—Adapted from *NIH News in Health*, a publication of the National Institutes of Health (newsinhealth.nih.gov).