Improving treatments and lowering the risk for cancer have been realized through cancer clinical trials over the years. Clinical trials test new treatments such as drugs, approaches to surgery or radiation therapy, combinations of treatments, or methods such as gene therapy. Today trials have evolved to include prevention, screening/early detection, quality of life and symptom control.

Clinical trials identify better methods of detecting, treating, and eventually preventing diseases like cancer. The enormous strides made in treating childhood cancer, for example, are the direct result of clinical trials. In the United States today, more than 70 percent of children with cancer live at least 5 years after diagnosis, as opposed to 55% in the mid-1970s.

Although clinical trials are available for persons who have cancer and those who might be at higher risk for getting cancer, very few eligible adults participate. In 1999 the American Society of Clinical Oncology reported that only 3% of adult cancer patients participated in clinical trials. In Hawaii, about 2% of the patients diagnosed with cancer participate in clinical trials.

Dr. Brian F. Issell, Director of the Cancer Research Center of Hawaii's Clinical Sciences Program notes, "Patient access to national, peer-reviewed clinical trials is an essential component of quality cancer care in our state. Clinical trials provide potentially better treatments while guaranteeing the best evidence-based care in a closely monitored setting."

NCI's New National Initiative - CTES

Because public awareness is low, and health professionals face barriers to participation, the National Cancer Institute initiated the Clinical Trials Education Series (CTES) this past fall. This program was developed to increase awareness of the importance of clinical trials through health professionals who have direct contact with patients, patient advocates and the public. CTES multimedia education materials include publications (resource guides), booklets, videos, and slide presentations on CD-ROM (see diagram). Materials are customized for diverse audiences—health care professionals, patients and the general public—and can be further modified for specific groups.

The Series informs learners about:
- Understanding clinical trials;
- Ensuring protection for patients in clinical trials;
- Participating in clinical trials; and
- Communicating information about clinical trials.

CTES Resources:

For Physicians and Health Educators:

Reference Publications
Cancer Clinical Trials: The In-Depth Program
Cancer Clinical Trials: The Basic Workbook
Cancer Clinical Trials: A Resource Guide for Outreach, Education, and Advocacy
Trainer’s Guide for Cancer Education

Slide Programs on CD-ROM
Cancer Clinical Trials: In-Depth Information

Videos
Cancer Clinical Trials: An Introduction for Patients and Their Families

For Public and Patient Education:

Booklets
If You Have Cancer...What You Should Know About Clinical Trials (low literacy)
Taking Part in Clinical Trials: What Cancer Patients Need to Know
Taking Part in Clinical Trials: Cancer Prevention Studies: What Participants Need to Know (*Also available in Spanish)

Slide Programs on CD-ROM
Cancer Clinical Trials: The Basics
Cancer Clinical Trials: The Way We Make Progress Against Cancer

Videos
Cancer Clinical Trials: An Introduction for Patients and Their Families
Cancer Trials...Because Lives Depend On It (general awareness)

These resources may be obtained free of charge by calling 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237) or by visiting www.cancer.gov/publications (click on clinical trials).

Hawaii's Effort to Raise Awareness

The Cancer Information Service of Hawaii, as part of the UH Cancer Research Center of Hawaii, is sponsoring a Clinical Trials Education Initiative using CTES as the centerpiece of the project. Collaboration will be achieved through partnerships with physicians and other health care professionals, patients, and representatives from community health organizations and the private business sector. The overall objectives of this initiative are to:
- Increase clinical trials awareness statewide,
- Collaborate with partners to disseminate the Clinical Trials Education Series, and
- Increase familiarity/use of the Clinical Trials Education Series tools.
A Clinical Trials Education Committee (CTEC) has been formed to develop a statewide clinical trials education plan. Strategies identified in the plan will be implemented beginning in September 2002 with assistance from CTEC members and other community partners. Strategies under consideration include: "tailoring" the CTES tools to reach specific populations in Hawaii; training for Hawaii’s educators and health care community on how to use the CTES resources; and mass media promotions. CIS-Hawaii will lead efforts to evaluate the project to determine whether strategies implemented through the initiative contributed to increased clinical trials awareness in our communities.

For more information about the Clinical Trials Education Initiative and how to become involved, contact the Cancer Information Service of Hawaii at (808) 586-5853 or visit the Cancer Research Center of Hawaii’s website at www.crch.org.

References
4. NCI - Cancer Clinical Trials - Educating and Communicating.
During January, National Pancreatic Cancer Clinical Trials Awareness Month, learn why clinical trials are important and how to find the right trial for you. This is why PanCAN strongly recommends clinical trials at diagnosis and during every treatment decision. Learn More About Clinical Trials. Throughout the month, we will feature survivor stories, critical clinical trials information, ways to spread awareness and more. Start learning more: Understand treatment options, like clinical trials, that go beyond standard of care. Learn how to find the right clinical trial. Prepare to talk to your healthcare team about clinical trials with these 10 questions. Test your clinical trials knowledge by taking our clinical trials awareness quiz. Women’s participation in clinical trials has improved in many areas. But we need to continue this momentum. Women of all ages, races, ethnicities, and sexual orientation, as well as women with disabilities and chronic health conditions, should consider participating in a clinical trial. Supporting this kind of clinical trials diversity is a priority for the FDA. Raise awareness about the importance of diverse women in clinical trials. Share best practices about clinical study design, recruitment, and data analyses. Increasing the diversity of women in clinical trials can help improve healthcare for all women. FDA cannot do this work alone. With the help of the healthcare industry, clinicians, government, researchers, and other interested groups, we can encourage participation in clinical trials. Clinical trials are carefully designed, reviewed and completed, and need to be approved before they can start. People of all ages can take part in clinical trials, including children. There are 4 phases of biomedical clinical trials. WHO’s International Clinical Trials Registry Platform (ICTRP) links clinical trials registers globally in order to ensure a single point of access and the unambiguous identification of trials with a view to enhancing access to information by patients, families, patient groups and others. The ITRP is a global initiative that aims to make information about all clinical trials involving humans publicly available. It also aims to communicate and raise awareness of the need to register clinical trials; ensure the accessibility of registered data.