

Patient Perspectives - Cancer Immunotherapy Clinical Trials

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Cancer Immunotherapy Clinical Trials:
Concepts and Challenges

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The following relationships exist related to this presentation:

No Relationships to Disclose

Patient Perspectives on Clinical Trials

- Subject of much debate and controversy among patients and patient advocates
- Multiple perspectives and values drive debate
- Complex and nuanced issues frame discussion about ethics of clinical trials

Patient Perspectives on Clinical Trials

Framing the discussion

- The inherent tension between research and treatment
- Lack of effective treatment as justification
- Lack of proven efficacy, measurement of benefits

Tension between Research and Treatment

- Where does interest of the patient intersect with the needs of science?
- Can the needs of future knowledge through clinical research be reconciled with imperatives of clinical care?

Tension between Research and Treatment

- Are there potential benefits for patients participating in clinical trials?
- If not, what is the ethical justification for promoting clinical trials as best treatment option when no other is available?

Tension between Research and Treatment
Intersection of interest and need
Reconciling knowledge and care

- Critical scientifically
 - What is the scientific justification for participating in immunotherapy clinical trials
 - How to assess risk and benefit
- Toxicity
- Stuck with the status quo if there are no clinical trials
- On the other hand, should not overpromise and risks must be clearly explained

Tension between Research and Treatment
Intersection of interest and need
Reconciling knowledge and care

- Most patients want as much benefit as possible
 - Despite telling patients can't promise benefits, lure is still there
- Underlying issue is truly informed consent—does it really exist?
 - Consent documents not designed to improve patient understanding

Tension between Research and Treatment

Potential personal benefits

Best treatment option?

- Choosing a course of action is almost never a “best” vs. “worst” decision, is a decision among poor options
- Patient weighs: cost, quality of life, location
- Every patient comes with different values, expectations, measure of benefit

Tension between Research and Treatment

Potential personal benefits

Best treatment option?

- Answer is to design more meaningful studies
- How to judge meaningful benefit in cancer immunotherapy trials

Lack of effective treatment as justification

- Central justification for immunotherapy trials is no effective treatment currently exists or treatment is extremely toxic
- When is it ethical to have an immunotherapy trial?