

This glossary covers selected terms dealing with cancer clinical trials. For a comprehensive dictionary of cancer terms, visit [Cancer.gov](https://www.cancer.gov).

[A](#) | [B](#) | [C](#) | [D](#) | [E](#) | [F](#) | [G](#) | [H](#) | [I](#) | [J](#) | [K](#) | [L](#) | [M](#) | [N](#) | [O](#) | [P](#) | [Q](#) | [R](#) | [S](#) | [T](#) | [U](#) | [V](#) | [W](#) | [X](#) | [Y](#) | [Z](#)

[A](#)

Accrual

The number of patients entered into a study. Each clinical trial requires a specific number of participants in order to provide adequate information for analysis to answer the specific questions asked in the study.

ACOSOG

A National Cancer Institute (NCI)-funded cancer cooperative group. ACOSOG stands for American College of Surgeons Oncology Group.

ACRIN

A National Cancer Institute (NCI)-funded cancer cooperative group. ACRIN stands for American College of Radiology Imaging.

Action Study

In cancer prevention clinical trials, a study that focuses on finding out whether actions people take can prevent cancer.

Adjunctive Therapy

Another treatment used together with the primary treatment. Its purpose is to assist the primary treatment.

Adjuvant Therapy

Treatment given after the primary treatment to increase the chances of a cure. Adjuvant therapy may include chemotherapy, radiation therapy, hormone therapy, or biological therapy.

Adverse Effect

An unwanted side effect of treatment.

Agent Study

In cancer prevention clinical trials, a study that tests whether taking certain medicines, vitamins, minerals, or food supplements can prevent cancer. Also called

chemoprevention study.

AJCC Staging System

A system developed by the American Joint Committee on Cancer for describing the extent of cancer in a patient's body. The descriptions include TNM: T describes the size of the tumor and if it has invaded nearby tissue, N describes any lymph nodes that are involved, and M describes metastasis (spread of cancer from one body part to another).

Analysis

A process in which anything complex is separated into simple or less complex parts. In clinical trials, analysis typically refers to the review and interpretation of data collected during the study.

Anecdotal Report

An incomplete description of the medical and treatment history of one or more patients. Anecdotal reports may be published in places other than peer-reviewed, scientific journals.

Animal Model

An animal with a disease either the same as or like a disease in humans. Animal models are used to study the development and progression of diseases and to test new treatments before they are given to humans. Animals with transplanted human cancers or other tissues are called xenograft models.

Anti-angiogenesis

Prevention of the growth of new blood vessels.

Arm

A specific therapy program under study, often used interchangeably with treatment program, treatment regimen, treatment arm, or treatment. Used when referring to a particular treatment regimen in a study that has more than one regimen.

Antibody Therapy

Treatment with an antibody, a substance that can directly kill specific tumor cells or stimulate the immune system to kill tumor cells.

Antihormone Therapy

Treatment with drugs, surgery, or radiation in order to block the production or action of a

hormone. Antihormone therapy may be used in cancer treatment because certain hormones are able to stimulate the growth of some types of tumors.

Antineoplastic

A substance that blocks the formation of neoplasms (growths that may become cancerous).

B**Benign (Tumor)**

A tumor that is not cancerous. Benign tumors do not spread to tissues around them or to other parts of the body. Many can be surgically removed.

Best Practice

In medicine, treatment that experts agree is appropriate, accepted, and widely used. Healthcare providers are obligated to provide patients with the best practice. Also called standard therapy or standard of care.

Bias

In a clinical trial, a flaw in the study design or method of collecting and/or interpreting information. Biases can lead to incorrect conclusions about what the study or trial showed. Clinical trials use many methods to avoid bias.

Blinded Study

A type of study in which the patients (single-blinded) or the patients and their doctors (double-blinded) do not know which drug or treatment is being given. The opposite of a blinded study is an open label study.

C**CALGB**

A National Cancer Institute (NCI)-funded cancer cooperative group. CALGB stands for Cancer and Leukemia Group B.

Cancer

A term for diseases in which abnormal cells divide without control. Cancer cells can invade nearby tissues and can spread through the bloodstream and lymphatic system to other parts of the body.

Carcinoid Tumor

A slow-growing type of tumor usually found in the gastrointestinal system (most often in the appendix), and sometimes in the lungs or other sites. Carcinoid tumors may spread to

the liver or other sites in the body, and they may secrete substances such as serotonin or prostaglandins.

Carcinoma in Situ

Cancer that involves only the cells in which it began and that has not spread to nearby tissues.

Case Report

A detailed report of the diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up of an individual patient. Case reports also contain some demographic information about the patient (for example, age, gender, ethnic origin).

Case Series

A group or series of case reports involving patients who were given similar treatment. Reports of case series usually contain detailed information about the individual patients. This includes demographic information (for example, age, gender, ethnic origin) and information on diagnosis, treatment, response to treatment, and follow-up after treatment.

Case-Control Study

A study that compares two groups of people: those with the disease or condition under study (cases) and a very similar group of people who do not have the disease or condition (controls). Researchers study the medical and lifestyle histories of the people in each group to learn what factors may be associated with the disease or condition. Also called a retrospective study.

Chemoprevention

The use of drugs, vitamins, or other agents to reduce the risk of, or delay the development or recurrence of, cancer.

Chemoprevention Studies

In cancer prevention clinical trials, studies test whether taking certain medicines, vitamins, minerals, or food supplements can prevent cancer. Also called agent studies.

Chemotherapy

The treatment of disease, such as cancer, by drugs.

Clinical Practice Guidelines

Guidelines developed to help healthcare professionals and patients make decisions about screening, prevention, or treatment of a specific health condition.

Clinical Resistance

The failure of a cancer to shrink after treatment.

Clinical Study

A type of research study that uses volunteers to test new methods of prevention, screening, diagnosis, or treatment of a disease. The trial may be carried out in a clinic or other medical facility. Also called a clinical trial.

Clinical Trial

A type of research study that uses volunteers to test new methods of prevention, screening, diagnosis, or treatment of a disease. The trial may be carried out in a clinic or other medical facility. Also called a clinical study.

COG

A National Cancer Institute (NCI)-funded cancer cooperative group. COG stands for Children's Oncology Group.

Cohort Study

A research study that compares a particular outcome (such as lung cancer) in groups of individuals who are alike in many ways but differ by a certain characteristic (for example, female nurses who smoke compared with those who do not smoke).

Comfort Care

Care given to improve the quality of life of patients who have a serious or life-threatening disease. The goal of comfort care is to prevent or treat as early as possible the symptoms of the disease, side effects caused by treatment of the disease, and psychological, social, and spiritual problems related to the disease or its treatment. Also called palliative care, supportive care, and symptom management.

Compassionate Use Trial

A way to provide an investigational therapy to a patient who is not eligible to receive that therapy in a clinical trial, but who has a serious or life-threatening illness for which other treatments are not available. Also called expanded access trial.

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)

Forms of treatment that are used in addition to (complementary) or instead of (alternative) standard treatments. These practices generally are not considered standard medical approaches. CAM may include dietary supplements, megadose vitamins, herbal preparations, special teas, acupuncture, massage therapy, magnet therapy, spiritual healing, and meditation.

Complete Remission

The disappearance of all signs of cancer in response to treatment. This does not always mean the cancer has been cured. Also called a complete response.

Complete Response

The disappearance of all signs of cancer in response to treatment. This does not always mean the cancer has been cured. Also called a complete remission.

Consolidation Therapy

A type of high-dose chemotherapy often given as the second phase (after induction therapy) of a cancer treatment regimen for leukemia. Also called intensification therapy.

Control Group

In a clinical trial, the group that does not receive the new treatment being studied. This group is compared to the group that receives the new treatment, to see if the new treatment works.

Controlled Study

An experiment or clinical trial that includes a comparison (control) group.

Conventional Therapy

A currently accepted and widely used treatment for a certain type of disease, based on the results of past research. Also called conventional treatment.

Conventional Treatment

A currently accepted and widely used treatment for a certain type of disease, based on the results of past research. Also called conventional therapy.

Cooperative Group

A group of physicians, hospitals, or both formed to treat a large number of persons in the same way so that a new treatment can be evaluated quickly. Clinical trials of new cancer treatments often require many more people than a single physician or hospital can care for.

D**Data Safety and Monitoring Committee**

An impartial group that oversees a clinical trial and reviews the results to see if they are acceptable. This group determines if the trial should be changed or closed.

Diagnosis

The process of identifying a disease by its characteristic signs, symptoms, and laboratory findings. Plural: diagnoses.

Diagnostic Trial

A research study that evaluates methods of detecting disease.

Disease Progression

Cancer that continues to grow or spread.

Disease-Free Survival

Length of time after treatment during which no cancer is found. Can be reported for an individual patient or for a study population.

Disease- Specific Survival

The percentage of subjects in a study who have survived a particular disease for a defined period of time. Usually reported as time since diagnosis or treatment. In calculating this percentage, only deaths from the disease being studied are counted. Subjects who died from some other cause are not included in the calculation.

Distant Cancer

Refers to cancer that has spread from the original (primary) tumor to distant organs or distant lymph nodes.

Dose

The amount of medicine taken, or radiation given, at one time.

Double-blinded study

A clinical trial in which neither the medical staff nor the person knows which of several possible therapies the person is receiving.

Drug

Any substance, other than food, that is used to prevent, diagnose, treat or relieve symptoms of a disease or abnormal condition. Also refers to a substance that alters mood or body function, or that can be habit-forming or addictive, especially a narcotic.

[E](#)**ECOG**

A National Cancer Institute (NCI)-funded cancer cooperative group. ECOG stands for Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group.

Efficacy

Effectiveness. In medicine, the ability of an intervention (for example, a drug or surgery) to produce the desired beneficial effect.

Eligibility Criteria

In clinical trials, requirements that must be met for an individual to be included in a study. These requirements help make sure that patients in a trial are similar to each other in terms of specific factors such as age, type and stage of cancer, general health, and previous treatment. When all participants meet the same eligibility criteria, it gives researchers greater confidence that results of the study are caused by the intervention being tested and not by other factors.

Endpoint

In clinical trials, an event or outcome that can be measured objectively to determine whether the intervention being studied is beneficial. The endpoints of a clinical trial are usually included in the study objectives. Some examples of endpoints are survival, improvements in quality of life, relief of symptoms, and disappearance of the tumor.

Evaluable Disease

Disease that cannot be measured directly by the size of the tumor but can be evaluated by other methods specific to a particular clinical trial.

Evaluable Patients

Patients whose response to a treatment can be measured because enough information has been collected.

Experimental

In clinical trials, refers to a drug (including a new drug, dose, combination, or route of administration) or procedure that has undergone basic laboratory testing and received approval from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to be tested in human subjects. A drug or procedure may be approved by the FDA for use in one disease or condition, but be considered experimental in other diseases or conditions. Also called investigational.

G**Gene**

The functional and physical unit of heredity passed from parent to offspring. Genes are pieces of DNA, and most genes contain the information for making a specific protein.

Gene Therapy

Treatment that alters a gene. In studies of gene therapy for cancer, researchers are trying to improve the body's natural ability to fight the disease or to make the cancer cells more sensitive to other kinds of therapy.

Genetic Testing

Analyzing DNA to look for a genetic alteration that may indicate an increased risk for developing a specific disease or disorder.

GOG

A National Cancer Institute (NCI)-funded cancer cooperative group. GOG stands for Gynecologic Oncology Group.

Grade

The grade of a tumor depends on how abnormal the cancer cells look under a microscope and how quickly the tumor is likely to grow and spread. Grading systems are different for each type of cancer.

Grading

A system for classifying cancer cells in terms of how abnormal they appear when examined under a microscope. The objective of a grading system is to provide information about the probable growth rate of the tumor and its tendency to spread. The systems used to grade tumors vary with each type of cancer. Grading plays a role in treatment decisions.

H**Histologic Examination**

The examination of tissue specimens under a microscope.

Histology

The study of tissues and cells under a microscope.

Hormone Therapy

Treatment that adds, blocks or removes hormones. For certain conditions (such as diabetes or menopause), hormones are given to adjust low hormone levels. To slow or stop the growth of certain cancers (such as prostate and breast cancer), synthetic hormones or other drugs may be given to block the body's natural hormones. Sometimes surgery is needed to remove the gland that makes hormones. Also called hormonal therapy, hormone treatment, or endocrine therapy.

Hyperfractionation

A way of giving radiation therapy in smaller-than-usual doses two or three times a day instead of once a day.

I

Immunosuppression

Suppression of the body's immune system and its ability to fight infections or disease. Immunosuppression may be deliberately induced with drugs, as in preparation for bone marrow or other organ transplantation to prevent rejection of the donor tissue. It may also result from certain diseases such as AIDS or lymphoma or from anticancer drugs.

Immunotherapy

Treatment to stimulate or restore the ability of the immune system to fight infections and other diseases. Also used to lessen side effects that may be caused by some cancer treatments. Also known as biological therapy, biotherapy, or biological response modifier (BRM) therapy.

Induction Therapy

Treatment designed to be used as a first step toward shrinking the cancer and in evaluating response to drugs and other agents. Induction therapy is followed by additional therapy to eliminate whatever cancer remains.

Informed Consent

A process in which a person learns key facts about a clinical trial, including potential risks and benefits, before deciding whether or not to participate in a study. Informed consent continues throughout the trial.

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

A group of scientists, doctors, clergy, and consumers at each healthcare facility that participates in a clinical trial. IRBs are designed to protect study participants. They review and must approve the action plan for every clinical trial. They check to see that the trial does not involve undue risks and includes safeguards for patients.

Intergroup

A collaboration of cooperative groups in order to conduct clinical trials.

Investigational

In clinical trials, refers to a drug (including a new drug, dose, combination, or route of administration) or procedure that has undergone basic laboratory testing and received

approval from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to be tested in human subjects. A drug or procedure may be approved by the FDA for use in one disease or condition, but be considered investigational in other diseases or conditions. Also called experimental.

Investigator

A researcher in a clinical trial or clinical study.

L

Laboratory Study

Research done in a laboratory. These studies may use test tubes or animals to find out if a drug, procedure, or treatment is likely to be useful. Laboratory studies take place before any testing is done in humans.

Laboratory Test

A medical procedure that involves testing a sample of blood, urine, or other substance from the body. Tests can help determine a diagnosis, plan treatment, check to see if treatment is working, or monitor the disease over time.

Late Effects

Side effects of cancer treatment that appear months or years after treatment has ended. Late effects include physical and mental problems and second cancers.

M

Maintenance Therapy

Treatment that is given to help a primary (original) treatment keep working. Maintenance therapy is often given to help keep cancer in remission.

Malignancy

A cancerous tumor that can invade and destroy nearby tissue and spread to other parts of the body.

Malignant

Cancerous - Malignant tumors can invade and destroy nearby tissue and spread to other parts of the body.

Margin

The edge or border of the tissue removed in cancer surgery. The margin is described as negative or clean when the pathologist finds no cancer cells at the edge of the tissue, suggesting that all of the cancer has been removed. The margin is described as positive or involved when the pathologist finds cancer cells at the edge of the tissue, suggesting that all of the cancer has not been removed.

Marker

A diagnostic indication that disease may develop.

Mean Survival Time

The average time patients in a clinical study remained alive. The time is measured beginning either at diagnosis or the start of treatment.

Measurable Disease

A tumor that can be accurately measured in size. This information can be used to judge response to treatment.

Median Survival Time

The time from either diagnosis or treatment at which half of the patients with a given disease are found to be, or expected to be, still alive. In a clinical trial, median survival time is one way to measure how effective a treatment is.

Medical Oncologist

A doctor who specializes in diagnosing and treating cancer using chemotherapy, hormonal therapy, and biological therapy. A medical oncologist often is the main healthcare provider for a person who has cancer. A medical oncologist also may coordinate treatment provided by other specialists.

Metastases

The spread of cancer from one part of the body to another. A tumor formed by cells that have spread is called a “metastatic tumor” or a “metastasis.” The metastatic tumor contains cells that are like those in the original (primary) tumor. The plural form of metastasis is metastases.

Metastasize

To spread from one part of the body to another. When cancer cells metastasize and form secondary tumors, the cells in the metastatic tumor are like those in the original (primary)

tumor.

Micrometastases

Small numbers of cancer cells that have spread from the primary tumor to other parts of the body and are too few to be picked up in a screening or diagnostic test.

Multidisciplinary

In medicine, a term used to describe a treatment planning approach or team that includes a number of doctors and other health care professionals who are experts in different specialties (disciplines). In cancer treatment, the primary disciplines are medical oncology (treatment with drugs), surgical oncology (treatment with surgery), and radiation oncology (treatment with radiation).

Myelosuppression

A condition in which bone marrow activity is decreased, resulting in fewer red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets. Myelosuppression is a side effect of some cancer treatments. When myelosuppression is severe, it is called myeloablation.

N

Neoplasm

An abnormal mass of tissue that results from excessive cell division. Neoplasms may be benign (not cancerous), or malignant (cancerous). Also called tumor.

NSABP

A National Cancer Institute (NCI)-funded cancer cooperative group. NSABP stands for National Surgical Adjuvant Breast and Bowel Project.

NCCTG

A National Cancer Institute (NCI)-funded cancer cooperative group. NCCTG stands for North Central Cancer Treatment Group.

O

Objective Response

A measurable response.

Observational Study

A type of study in which individuals are observed or certain outcomes are measured. No attempt is made to affect the outcome (for example, no treatment is given).

Oncologist

A doctor who specializes in treating cancer. Some oncologists specialize in a particular type of cancer treatment. For example, a radiation oncologist specializes in treating cancer with radiation.

Oncology

The science dealing with the properties and features of cancer, including the causes and the disease process.

Open-Label Study

A type of study in which both the health providers and the patients are aware of the drug or treatment being given.

P**Partial Remission**

A decrease in the size of a tumor, or in the extent of cancer in the body, in response to treatment. Also called partial response.

Partial Response

A decrease in the size of a tumor, or in the extent of cancer in the body, in response to treatment. Also called partial remission.

Patient Advocate

A person who helps a patient work with others who have an effect on the patient's health, including doctors, insurance companies, employers, case managers, and lawyers. A patient advocate helps resolve issues about health care, medical bills, and job discrimination related to a patient's medical condition. Cancer advocacy groups try to raise public awareness about important cancer issues, such as the need for cancer support services, education, and research. Such groups work to bring about change that will help cancer patients and their families.

Performance Status

A measure of how well a patient is able to perform ordinary tasks and carry out daily activities. Two tools commonly used to measure performance status include the Karnofsky scale and the ECOG scale.

Phase I Trial

The first step in testing a new treatment in humans. These studies test the best way to give a new treatment (for example, by mouth, intravenous infusion, or injection) and the

best dose. The dose is usually increased a little at a time in order to find the highest dose that does not cause harmful side effects. Because little is known about the possible risks and benefits of the treatments being tested, phase I trials usually include only a small number of patients who have not been helped by other treatments.

Phase I/II Trial

A trial to study the safety, dosage levels, and response to a new treatment.

Phase II Trial

A study to test whether a new treatment has an anticancer effect (for example, whether it shrinks a tumor or improves blood test results) and whether it works against a certain type of cancer.

Phase II/III Trial

A trial to study response to a new treatment and the effectiveness of the treatment compared with the standard treatment regimen.

Phase III Trial

A study to compare the results of people taking a new treatment with the results of people taking the standard treatment (for example, which group has better survival rates or fewer side effects). In most cases, studies move into phase III only after a treatment seems to work in phases I and II. Phase III trials may include hundreds of people.

Phase IV Trial

After a treatment has been approved and is being marketed, it is studied in a phase IV trial to evaluate side effects that were not apparent in the phase III trial. Thousands of people are involved in a phase IV trial.

Placebo

An inactive substance or treatment that looks the same as, and is given the same way as, an active drug or treatment being tested. The effects of the active drug or treatment are compared to the effects of the placebo. The use of placebos in cancer treatment studies is very uncommon.

Placebo-Controlled Study

Refers to a clinical study in which the control patients receive a placebo.

Preclinical Study

Research using animals to find out if a drug, procedure, or treatment is likely to be useful. Preclinical studies take place before any testing in humans is done.

Premalignant

A term used to describe a condition that may (or is likely to) become cancer. Also called precancerous.

Primary Endpoint

The main result that is measured at the end of a study to see if a given treatment worked (e.g., the number of deaths or the difference in survival between the treatment group and the control group). What the primary endpoint will be is decided before the study begins.

Primary Tumor

The original tumor.

Prognosis

The likely outcome or course of a disease; the chance of recovery or recurrence.

Prognostic Factor

A situation or condition, or a characteristic of a patient, that can be used to estimate the chance of recovery from a disease or the chance of the disease recurring (coming back).

Progression

Increase in the size of a tumor or spread of cancer in the body.

Progression-Free Survival

One type of measurement that can be used in a clinical study or trial to help determine whether a new treatment is effective. It refers to the probability that a patient will remain alive, without the disease getting worse.

Progressive Disease

Cancer that is increasing in scope or severity.

Prospective

In medicine, a study or clinical trial in which participants are identified and then followed

forward in time.

Protocol

An action plan for a clinical trial. The plan states what the study will do, how, and why. It explains how many people will be in it, who is eligible to participate, what study agents or other interventions they will be given, what tests they will receive and how often, and what information will be gathered.

Q**Quality of Life**

The overall enjoyment of life. Many clinical trials assess the effects of cancer and its treatment on the quality of life. These studies measure aspects of an individual's sense of well-being and ability to carry out various tasks.

R**Radiation Therapy/Radiotherapy**

The use of high-energy radiation from x-rays, gamma rays, neutrons, and other sources to kill cancer cells and shrink tumors. Radiation may come from a machine outside the body (external-beam radiation therapy), or it may come from radioactive material placed in the body near cancer cells (internal radiation therapy, implant radiation, or brachytherapy). Systemic radiation therapy uses a radioactive substance, such as a radiolabeled monoclonal antibody, that circulates throughout the body. Also called radiotherapy.

Randomization

When referring to an experiment or clinical trial, the process by which animal or human subjects are assigned by chance to separate groups that compare different treatments or other interventions. Randomization gives each participant an equal chance of being assigned to any of the groups. It is one method used to prevent bias in research. People are assigned by chance to either the treatment or control group, like the flip of a coin.

Randomized Clinical Trial

A study in which the participants are assigned by chance to separate groups that compare different treatments; neither the researchers nor the participants can choose which group. Using chance to assign people to groups means that the groups will be similar and that the treatments they receive can be compared objectively. At the time of the trial, it is not known which treatment is best. It is the patient's choice to be in a randomized trial.

Recurrence

The return of cancer, at the same site as the original (primary) tumor or in another

location, after the tumor had disappeared.

Refractory Cancer

Cancer that has not responded to treatment.

Regression

A decrease in the size of a tumor or in the extent of cancer in the body.

Relapse

The return of signs and symptoms of cancer after a period of improvement.

Relative Survival Rate

A specific measurement of survival. For cancer, the rate is calculated by adjusting the survival rate to remove all causes of death except cancer. The rate is determined at specific time intervals, such as two (2) years and five (5) years after diagnosis.

Remission

A decrease in or disappearance of signs and symptoms of cancer. In partial remission, some, but not all, signs and symptoms of cancer have disappeared. In complete remission, all signs and symptoms of cancer have disappeared, although cancer still may be in the body. When the signs and symptoms of cancer go away, the disease is said to be in remission. A remission can be temporary or permanent.

Residual Disease

Cancer cells that remain after attempts to remove the cancer have been made.

Response

In medicine, an improvement related to treatment.

Response Rate

The percentage of patients whose cancer shrinks or disappears after treatment.

Retrospective Study

A study that compares two groups of people: those with the disease or condition under study (cases) and a very similar group of people who do not have the disease or condition (controls). Researchers study the medical and lifestyle histories of the people in each group to learn what factors may be associated with the disease or condition. For example, one group may have been exposed to a particular substance that the other was not. Also called a case-control study.

RTOG

A National Cancer Institute (NCI)-funded cancer cooperative group. RTOG stands for

Radiation Therapy Oncology Group.

S

Salvage Therapy

Treatment that is given after the cancer has not responded to other treatments.

Schedule

In clinical trials, the step-by-step plan for how patients are to be treated; for example, which drugs are to be given, the order and method by which they are to be given, the length of time of each infusion, the amount of time between courses, and the total length of treatment.

Second Line Therapy

Treatment that is given when initial treatment (first-line therapy) doesn't work, or stops working.

Selection Bias

An error in choosing the individuals or groups to take part in a study. Ideally, the subjects in a study should be very similar to one another and to the larger population from which they are drawn (for example, all individuals with the same disease or condition). If there are important differences, the results of the study may not be valid.

Side Effects

Problems that occur when treatment affects healthy cells. Common side effects of standard cancer treatments are fatigue, nausea, vomiting, decreased blood cell counts, hair loss, and mouth sores. New treatments being tested may have these or other unknown side effects.

Significant

In statistics, describes a mathematical measure of difference between groups. The difference is said to be significant if it is greater than what might be expected to happen by chance alone. Also called statistically significant.

Single-Blind Study

A type of clinical trial in which only the doctor knows whether a patient is taking the standard treatment or the new treatment being tested. This helps prevent bias in treatment studies.

Stable Disease

Cancer that is neither decreasing nor increasing in extent or severity.

Stage of Disease

An evaluation of the extent of the disease. If the cancer has spread, the stage describes how far it has spread from the original site to other parts of the body. The greater the spread of the cancer, the higher the stage. Classifying disease based on stage at diagnosis helps to determine appropriate treatment and prognosis.

Standard of Care

In medicine, treatment that experts agree is appropriate, accepted, and widely used. Healthcare providers are obligated to provide patients with the standard of care. Also called standard therapy or best practice.

Standard Therapy

In medicine, treatment that experts agree is appropriate, accepted, and widely used. Healthcare providers are obligated to provide patients with standard therapy. Also called standard of care or best practice.

Statistically Significant

Describes a mathematical measure of difference between groups. The difference is said to be statistically significant if it is greater than what might be expected to happen by chance alone. Also called significant.

Subjective Improvement

An improvement that is reported by the patient, but cannot be measured by the healthcare provider (for example, I feel better.).

Subset Analysis

In a clinical study, the evaluation of results for some but not all of the patients who participated. The selected patients have one or more characteristics in common, such as the same stage of disease or the same hormone receptor status.

Supportive Care

Care given to improve the quality of life of patients who have a serious or life-threatening disease. The goal of supportive care is to prevent or treat as early as possible the symptoms of the disease, side effects caused by treatment of the disease, and psychological, social, and spiritual problems related to the disease or its treatment. Also called palliative care, comfort care, and symptom management.

Survival Rate

The percentage of people in a study or treatment group who are alive for a given period of time after diagnosis. This is commonly expressed as five-year survival.

SWOG

A National Cancer Institute (NCI)-funded cancer cooperative group. SWOG stands for Southwest Oncology Group.

Systemic Disease

Disease that affects the whole body.

Systemic Therapy

Treatment using substances that travel through the bloodstream, reaching and affecting cells all over the body.

T

Targeted Therapy

A type of treatment that uses drugs or other substances to identify and attack specific cancer cells without harming normal cells. A monoclonal antibody is a type of targeted therapy.

Terminal Disease

Disease that cannot be cured and will cause death.

Third-Line Therapy

Treatment that is given when both initial treatment (first-line therapy) and subsequent treatment (second-line therapy) don't work, or stop working.

Treatment Group

The group that receives the new treatment being tested during a study. (See Control group.)

Tumor

A new and spontaneous growth of tissue that forms an abnormal mass. Tumors can be benign or malignant.

Tumor Board Review

A treatment planning approach in which a number of doctors who are experts in different specialties (disciplines) review and discuss the medical condition and treatment options of a patient. In cancer treatment, a tumor board review may include that of a medical oncologist (who provides cancer treatment with drugs), a surgical oncologist (who provides cancer treatment with surgery), and a radiation oncologist (who provides cancer treatment with radiation). Also called a multidisciplinary opinion.

Tumor Grade

A classification of tumor size.

U

Uncontrolled Study

A clinical study that lacks a comparison (i.e., a control) group.

V

Vaccine Therapy

A type of treatment that uses a substance or group of substances to stimulate the immune system to destroy a tumor or infectious microorganisms such as bacteria or viruses.

W

Watchful Waiting

Closely monitoring a patient's condition but withholding treatment until symptoms appear or change. Also called observation.

Sources: National Cancer Institute, Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group