Why is medical research important?

I am sure all of us have experienced disappointment with a prescription medication not working to our expectation. Frankly, even over the counter medicine may differ in how effective it is for some patients and not effective at all for others. Our society got accustomed to the fact that when we feel pain, discomfort, or other unwanted symptoms, we take a pill or a shot and we get better.

While this is not always the case, we do need to make sure medications are getting us better and doctors have many options to choose from and optimized our care. It is crucial not to experiment with medical treatment on our own and rather seek professional medical advice. It is also imperative that we discuss any current medication we already take before the new prescription is issued in order to avoid conflicting actions and side effects.

And finally, it is extremely important to contribute our time and knowledge to develop new medicines. In our country, all new drugs must be approved by Federal Drug Administration before they can be used and promoted. Prior to the approval, all potential new drugs must undergo a very controlled process of testing called clinical research trials or studies. Phase 3 studies are usually the final stage before the approval and sometimes are called pivotal FDA studies. Doctors test the new drugs under a very strict direction of the protocols and FDA, and report results as well as adverse events to sponsoring parties. Any potential new risk must be identified and documented, and distributed to all participants.

A doctor conducting clinical trials is called principal or primary investigator. His knowledge, training, and skills are verified prior to conducting any new study. Contrary to some public comments, doctors who run studies must not have any financial interest in the pharmaceutical companies they work with. They must sign a document called financial disclosure as well as confidentiality agreement. These two documents prevent them from any financial investing in the company or drug they work on, and prohibit release of any clinical confidential information to the public. They may share their knowledge about the new drug with a patient who signs a consent

form to participate in the study. This way, a doctor and a patient become 'partners' in developing of the new drug.

Studies, if run properly, can be a great benefit to the patients and our society. They are the only tool to make sure we improve medications for diseases and invent new ones that are not yet in use.

Developing the drug plays another, more economic role in our society. We all know how expensive some drugs are. The best way to control their price is to introduce competition. Generic medication can save hundreds of dollars and is mostly as effective as the brand.

Being a part of clinical research can be also a lot of fun. It is a process during which patients learn new drug action in practice with the research team. The new bonds are developed and many patients become far more knowledgeable about their own medical problems. It is a great learning opportunity for all. Patients who participate in clinical trials receive all medical care for free and they actually earn small stipend for every visit to the clinic.

If you have any further questions about clinical research, please call our team at 847 392 5440. We currently conduct studies in psoriasis, atopic dermatitis, nail fungus, acne, and rosacea.

Michael Bukhalo, MD
Arlington Dermatology
847 392 5440
www.arlingtondermatology.net