What to Expect from CLINICAL TRIALS

When a person considers participating in a clinical trial, there are several things he or she should be aware of, in order to have realistic expectations and adequate knowledge of possible risks and benefits:

- What is the purpose of the trial? Is the intent to find a cure, or simply a treatment, or perhaps preventive measures or a diagnostic test? Don’t sign up for a clinical trial unless your expectations are in line with the study’s objective.

- Is an experimental clinical trial appropriate for you? Have you tried the standard treatments and failed to benefit from them? Are you willing to try a treatment for which little is known, rather than try a treatment that has risks and possible benefits that are well understood?

- What are the known risks and benefits of the experimental treatment? How many people have been in the experiment before you? Did they experience any harm?

- Is the experimental product only slightly different from other available treatments (e.g., a slightly revised version of an existing drug), or is it a completely new approach to treatment?

- Who is paying for the study? Is it supported by government funds or a commercial firm? Does your doctor have a commercial interest in the therapy (e.g., a patent, royalties, etc.)? Note: Some universities have “Conflict of Interest” committees who review these factors and decide whether a commercial conflict may

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