

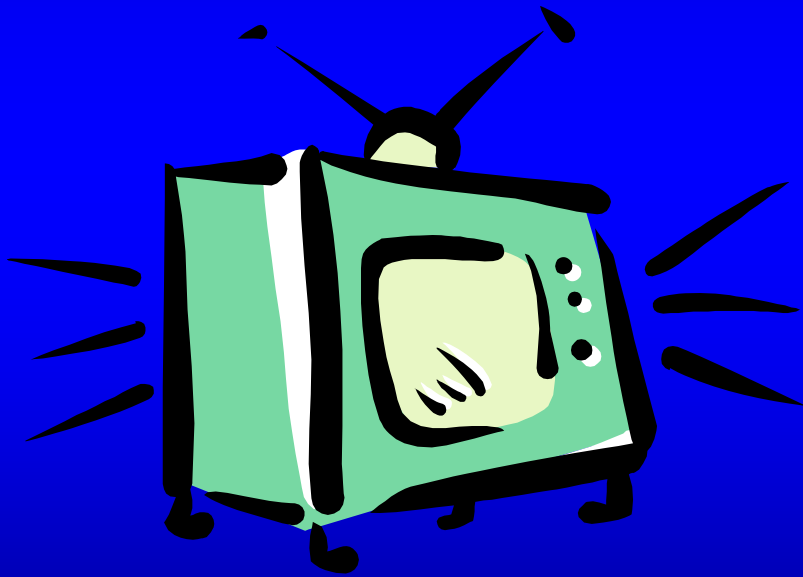
# UNDERSTANDING RESEARCH STUDIES

Kim Meyer, CCRC

Christine Dalton, PA-C

UNC Center for Functional GI and  
Motility Disorders

# Introduction



- You may have heard references to research studies on TV or the radio and wondered what they are
- Research studies are also called clinical trials, drug trials or drug studies

# What Is a Research Study?

- A research study tests the effect of a medication, medical device or treatment in a group of volunteers
- Studies measure a drug's ability to treat a medical condition, the drug's safety and possible side effects

# Why Are Research Studies Needed?



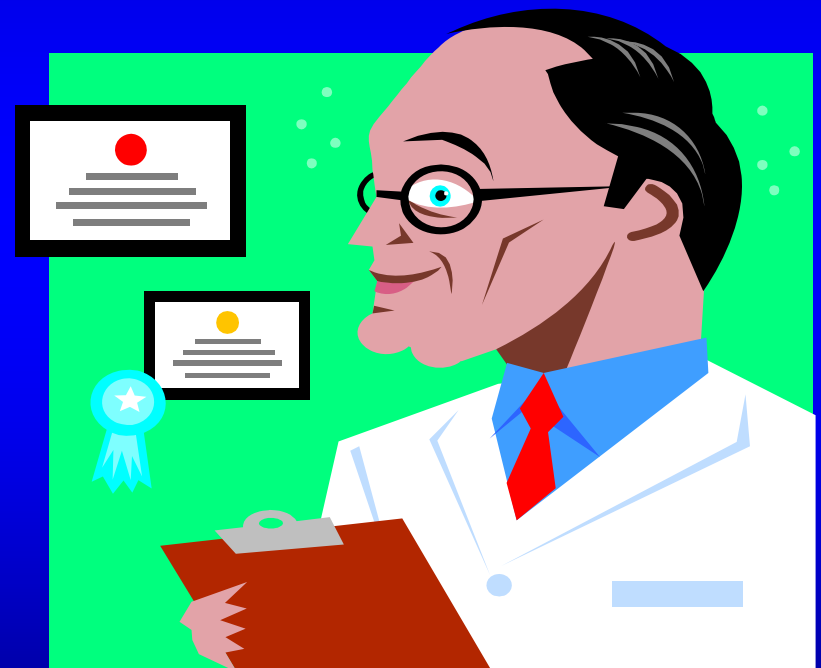
- Medical researchers are constantly looking for new or better ways to treat illness or disease
- Their discoveries cannot be put into general use until careful testing has been done

# Who Sponsors Research Studies?

- Research studies are sponsored by pharmaceutical companies, research institutes or other health organizations
  - **Pharmaceutical companies often provide the funds for conducting the study**
  - **They often design the protocol (a set of detailed guidelines that clinical investigators follow)**
- The same study may be conducted at several different locations

# Who Conducts Research Studies?

- Only trained doctors, nurses and researchers actually conduct the study
- The study coordinator is in charge of the day-to-day running of the study
- The principal investigator has overall responsibility for carrying out the protocol



# The Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

- The FDA is a government agency that is responsible for many aspects of research studies
  - **Regulates the conduct of research studies**
  - **Enforces laws on the manufacture, testing and use of drugs and medical devices**
  - **All new drugs and devices must be approved by the FDA before they can be used by the general public**
  - **The FDA must approve each study before you can participate in it.**

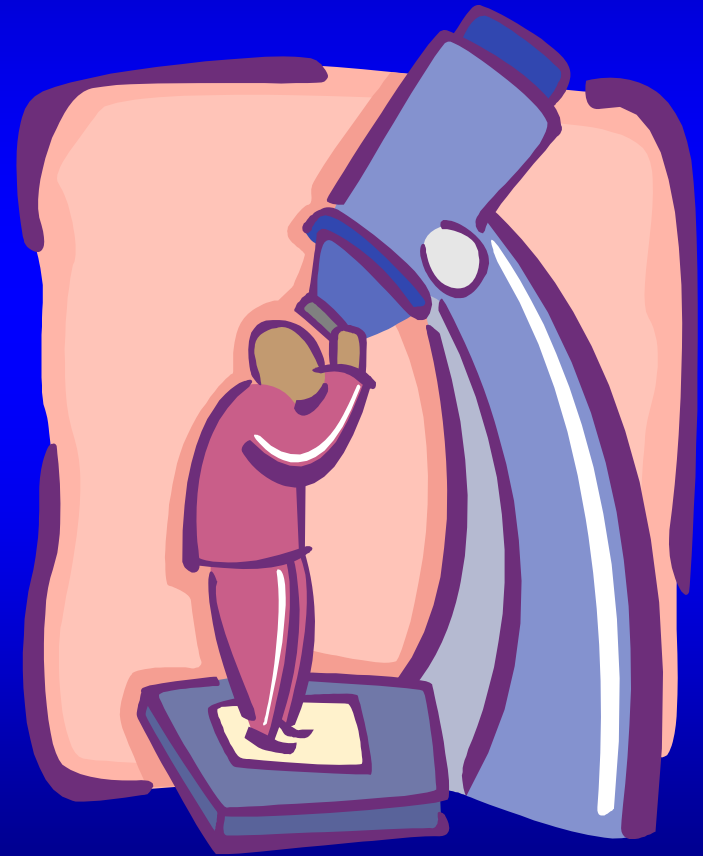
# Why Should You Participate in a Research Study?

- To help yourself
  - You may have a beneficial effect from the study drug
  - You will receive a great deal of personal medical attention usually at no cost (often free labwork, free ekgs, sometimes free colonoscopies).
- To help others
  - Research study volunteers help make new treatments available to people who need them



# What Are the Different Types of Research Studies?

- Phase I studies –  
Healthy volunteers  
and sometimes  
animals
  - Main purpose is  
safety
  - Small number of  
subjects (20-100)



# Phase II Studies

- The main purpose is safety and effectiveness
  - Several hundred patients, few months to 2 years
  - Randomized controlled - Active drug is compared to placebo (inactive substance or “sugar” pill) or standard treatment

# Phase III Studies

- These studies also use patients
  - **Once the drug is at Phase III, there is a more thorough understanding of Its effectiveness, benefits and side effects.**
  - **Large numbers of subjects participate in this phase– Several hundred to several thousand for several years**
  - **70 to 90% of drugs successfully complete phase III trials**
  - **After Phase III, the drug is usually approved for sale**

# Phase IV Studies

- **Also called post marketing studies**
  - **Compare study drug to similar drugs on market**
  - **Studies are done on the long term effectiveness or effect on quality of life**
  - **Phase IV studies look at new indications for the drug**



# Who Is Eligible to Be in a Research Study?

- Almost anyone can be in some type of study
- Each study has certain requirements about health, medications or age depending on what specific questions are being asked
- You must meet the requirements of a particular study to be an eligible volunteer

# What Is Involved in Participating in a Research Study?

- Participating in a research study is much like a regular visit to a clinic or doctor's office, but with even greater personal attention
- What will occur at each visit will depend on each individual study

# What Are the Risks of Participating in a Study?

- **Risks vary from study to study**
- **Researchers expect certain results but since the treatment is still being studied it is impossible to say exactly what the risks may be**
- **If a side effect or adverse event occurs, it is generally temporary and will go away as soon as the treatment is stopped**



# Informed Consent Form

- Anyone participating in a research study is required to sign an “informed consent” form
- It is also signed by the investigator and/or study coordinator
- It details the nature of the study, the risks involved and what will happen
- It also informs study subjects that they have a right to leave the study at any time and who to call if they have questions



# Institutional Review Board (IRB)

- Any physician awarded a research study must get approval from the IRB before beginning the study
- The IRB is composed of physicians and lay people
- The board reviews each study to ensure patients' rights are protected and that there are no unnecessary risks in the study



# If You Are Thinking About Participating in a Research Study

- Think it over carefully
- Weigh possible benefits against risks
- Make sure all your questions are answered by the study personnel