

While a Cure Remains Elusive, Innovative Mesothelioma Treatments Offer New Hope to Victims

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Clinical Trials Give Patients Access to the Cutting Edge of Modern Medicine

Despite the fact that mesothelioma survival rates have improved, a cure still eludes the medical community. The median survival time following diagnosis varies widely, ranging anywhere from four to 18 months. But although a remedy is not yet available, today's researchers are using clinical trials to look beyond standard treatments and explore new ways to help mesothelioma patients live longer and more comfortably.

"Some recent innovations in mesothelioma treatment have shown encouraging results in early trials," says David Sugarbaker, M.D., founder of the International Mesothelioma Program at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. "In many cases, new techniques are being combined with traditional treatments to assure the greatest chance of success."

Clinical trials provide mesothelioma patients with access to cutting-edge therapies not yet available to everyone. Below are some advanced treatment approaches currently being developed and studied for their effectiveness in treating mesothelioma.

- Intracavitary chemotherapy. High-dosage medication is placed directly into affected body cavities, where it enters tumor cells directly.
- Alimta®. Approved by the FDA in 2004, Alimta has been shown to drastically improve symptoms for some mesothelioma patients and prolong survival time by as much as 30%.
- Photodynamic therapy (PDT). A photoactive drug and laser light are used to isolate and destroy cancer cells without harming healthy cells.
- Brachytherapy. Patients are implanted with tiny radioactive devices that deliver radiation over a span of several months.

"Participating in a clinical trial can offer immense benefits for a mesothelioma patient," explains Attorney Jim Sokolove, principal and founder of the Law Offices of James Sokolove (www.jimsokolove.com). "However, it is a personal decision that should be made carefully with their physician and family."

Information on mesothelioma clinical trials can be found on the Mesothelioma Resource Center (www.mesorc.com), a new website launched by the Law Offices of James Sokolove earlier in the fall. The site, created with support from the International Mesothelioma Program and the Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation, serves as a comprehensive resource for mesothelioma patients and their loved ones.

"The Mesothelioma Resource Center explains what is involved in a clinical trial, factors to consider before choosing to partake in one, and how to find current trials," Sokolove says. "Our goal is to connect mesothelioma victims nationwide with the latest and most promising therapies available today. Being armed with information plays a key role in coping with this tragic illness."

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