

# WHAT ARE CLINICAL TRIALS?



SPINAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE | CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

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Clinical trials allow researchers to test their research into a new clinical treatment or intervention on consumers. Clinical trials investigate if a new treatment works, if the treatment is better than existing or other treatments, and any side effects.

A trial protocol sets out the plan and guidelines for the trial to follow to ensure that it is as safe as possible for participants. The protocol also ensures that the information gathered from the trial is gathered in a correct and timely manner. For example, a trial protocol may outline who can participate in the trial, the methods used in the trial, the interventions to be trialled, and the trial's length.

Researchers may choose to split the participants in a clinical trial into control groups. For example, researchers may give the trial medication/intervention to one group, give an existing medication/intervention or placebo to another group, and monitor the differences between the two groups.

A single-blind trial is where the participant in the clinical trial does not know whether they are receiving the new intervention. A double-blind trial is where neither the researcher nor the participant knows which intervention the participant receives.

## WHY ARE CONSUMERS ESSENTIAL IN CLINICAL TRIALS?

Although the purpose of clinical trials is to see whether the new treatment/intervention is safe and effective, consumers also provide valuable perspective and feedback to researchers. During the clinical trial stage, consumers have the opportunity to provide researchers with real-life feedback on whether the intervention is practical and has an impact on their quality of life that is meaningful. This feedback provides researchers with the potential to further develop the treatment/intervention with the consumer input and ensure that the outcome is safe and effective and has real-life benefits. Without consumer involvement in clinical trials, researchers cannot adequately test their treatment/intervention, delaying future development that will benefit the spinal community.

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The Consumer Engagement Program is supported by the SRI's major partner, the IOOF Foundation. Resources are developed with the support of the John T Reid Charitable Trusts, The Marian and E.H. Flack Trust and the Brian M. Davis Charitable Foundation.