



Victorian Cancer Trials Link

Clinical trial participant, Natasha Morello, shares her experience of being treated in a cancer clinical trial.

My name is Natasha Morello and I was diagnosed with stage 4 Hodgkin's lymphoma in 2012.

What led you to participate in a clinical trial?

I had symptoms for about eight or nine months before I was diagnosed with lymphoma.

In my first year of treatment, I had mainly chemotherapy. At the start of my second year of treatment, I also needed a stem cell transplant.

When this transplant failed, my specialist said to go see another specialist about enrolling in a clinical trial. When we went to go see the specialist, he gave me two options, for two different trials. He said to look at the research and decide which one he thought was better for me. And then I ended up picking one that had fewer symptoms and that he actually suggested as well.

For me, after my first transplant was unsuccessful, the clinical trial was used as a way to decrease the size of my cancer. They said very clearly at the start that it wasn't a curative drug that it was a control drug, and it was really imperative, going into my second transplant, that my cancer was as small as possible to ensure the biggest success.



Prior to your diagnosis, what did you know about clinical trials?

It felt very daunting going into a clinical trial. My understanding of clinical trials was that it was really a last resort and a last hope, so I was very scared about it. But at the time, all the staff and all the specialists were very confident that it would have some sort of effect on my cancer, so that was very reassuring and it was just a day by day process.

The doctors and the nurses were very informative throughout the trial. My mum was always asking questions, I was always asking questions and they always really understood. I think most of the specialists and nurses understand that being on a clinical trial isn't

necessarily like having normal treatment. There's always something new or something going on so they're always willing to answer your questions, no matter what.

In your experience, what benefits came out of participating in a clinical trial?

If I hadn't had the clinical trial, I wouldn't have been able to go on to the transplant and ultimately, I think I wouldn't have gone into remission. The clinical trial was so pivotal in reducing the size of my cancer that it increased the success rate that I would have on the transplant. So, without it, I probably wouldn't have gone into remission.

Another benefit that I didn't think about until later is – on my clinical trial, because my platelets were so reactive to the drug and always so low, they had to call in a separate drug to help bring my platelets back up. According to the specialist at the time, I was the only one that actually had that happen to. Because of my experience, a secondary paper was written to go with the clinical trial, saying that if this happened in other people, they could bring this other drug in to help make it more effective. Knowing that that's helped hopefully other people is a really good feeling too.

To watch a video of Natasha explaining her experience in full, visit
www.cancervic.org.au/trials.

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