

Frequently Asked Questions About Clinical Trials in the College of Veterinary Medicine

What is a clinical trial?

Clinical studies are investigations in animals or humans that are used to evaluate methods to prevent, treat or cure disease. A clinical trial is one type of clinical study that involves testing the effects of a new treatment on an illness, or a new diagnostic test to help develop diagnostics information.

What are the benefits of participating in a clinical trial?

Participation in a clinical trial allows the patient to gain access to new treatment before it is widely available, as well as obtain expert veterinary medical care during the trial. In addition, there may be financial incentives for enrolling in a clinical trial, including free veterinary care, testing and treatment. Participants in clinical trials are also helping others by contributing to the advancement of medical research.

What are the risks involved in participating in a clinical trial?

The experimental treatment may not be effective for the participant, and may be associated with side effects. In addition, participation in a clinical trial may involve multiple visits to the study site for treatment and follow-up. The specific requirements of each study and associated risks are detailed in a Informed Consent document. This document must be signed prior to participation in a clinical trial. However, informed consent is not a contract, and the participant may withdraw from the trial at any time. To help ensure the safety of study participants, all clinical trials performed at the OSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital must be approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) at Oregon State University.

Why are clinical trials important?

Extensive laboratory research precedes the start of a clinical trial. The treatment or diagnostic test in question will have been evaluated in a laboratory setting and promising results obtained that support further evaluation in a clinical trial. As laboratory investigations cannot accurately predict how an individual with a disease will respond to the treatment, a clinical trial must be performed to identify how safe and effective a treatment is for its intended use. Many clinical trials in the veterinary field involve treatments that have already been proven safe and effective in humans with similar disease. However, since animals differ from humans in many ways, veterinary-based clinical trials are needed to determine the most appropriate treatment for our pets.

How are clinical trials financed?

Research in the OSU College of Veterinary Medicine is supported by a variety of means. The state of Oregon provides base support for research programs, but most research activity is funded through either competitive grants from national agencies, such as the National Institutes of Health, or through grants from private donors, companies, foundations and other organizations.