What Being on a Clinical Trial Is Like

January 17, 2018 By Lisa Vento Nielsen

I have been writing a bit about my clinical trial here but have not updated in a while. I decided, after careful thought and prayer, to sign up for the Pallas clinical trial back in August. I had just completed all of my "treatment" and was now down to going to see doctors once every six months but with surgeon and oncologist, that wound up to be every four visits a year as I would go in May and November to oncology and June and December to surgeon. Oh, and in between those dates, I go in for my Lupron shot every three months, too, so that is usually February, May, August, November.

I completed chemotherapy in May 2017 and my last radiation was July 2017. I saw my oncologist once after chemotherapy only. She recommended at that visit that I consider joining the clinical trial for Ibrance (called the Pallas trial). I wrote all about my decision process and how the trial works regarding if you get the pills or not here and also here.

Getting cancer is almost like a part-time job, really. There is so much to do but for many people, there is a "post-treatment" funk that is common to all cancer patients, in my opinion. We go from seeing doctors and medical teams every two weeks for treatment and blood work, and then we see everyone much much less. For me, this is not the case but it could have been if I decided not to do the clinical trial.

Yesterday, was my visit to get blood work and the next 3 cycles of drugs for the trial. Originally, I was going in every 2 weeks to do blood work and then at the 4 week visit picking up the month's pills (see more about that here). I last was with oncology in October to do the blood work and then I was given the 3 cycles of pills. I am now on the 6th "cycle" or month of Pallas. I have been lucky in that I have not had any noticeable side effects. I do have low blood counts, which is normal for this class of drug.

The trial lasts a total of 24 months. I am happy to be doing my small part in helping test a new class of drug for breast cancer patients. It is an already FDA-approved drug for those with stage 4 breast cancer. It is being studied to see if the same effects of cancer killing can be proven in earlier stages. I do this trial in addition to my hormone inhibitor and Lupron ovary shot.

I will update again on how it is going. Did you take part in a clinical trial? How did you find it? This is what I do in the time between.

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