

By Cynthia Matossian, MD, FACS



Cynthia Matossian, MD, FACS, is the founder of Matossian Eye Associates. Her e-mail is cmatossian@matossianeye.com.

How clinical trials can help differentiate your practice

Participation involves organization and staff involvement. Here's how we got started

Participating in clinical trials can elevate the practice, set us apart from competitors and, potentially, benefit our patients with new treatments. Clinical trials also help drug makers develop new therapies. In that sense, it's a win-win-win.

Bringing in a clinical trial requires nearly as much work as conducting one. Every team member must contribute and you'll need to hone your own organizational skills.

We've participated in many over the years. Here's how you can get started.

MAKING INROADS

When local pharmaceutical representatives visited me, I

would mention my interest in running a clinical trial and ask if they knew how to get involved. Often, they would find me the appropriate contact within their company.

Once I got in touch with those contacts, I would regularly e-mail them until we found a good trial match. Attracting a pharmaceutical company to your practice doesn't come easy. Interested suitors will send a fleet of trial monitors and study coordinators to perform a site inspection and review your equipment, patient volume and pathology mix.

Initially, I started with small trials about contact lens solutions or artificial tears. You have to establish your reputation in clinical studies by starting with small trials. Now, we're doing surgical trials for intraocular deposition of medications and cataract surgery equipment.

DELEGATE

Once you're selected, you must consider another, easily overlooked, metric: staff personality. We've found success identifying two types of personalities and linking them to respective roles:

Staff in charge of the process, such as data entry, and staff in charge of enrolling patients. The former should be detail-oriented and able to meet deadlines reliably.

The latter are our "cheerleaders." Their job is to expose patients to the idea and talk up the trial. They must be intimately familiar with the trial criteria.

To help screeners identify these patients, we print the criteria on index cards and distribute them to all of our ophthalmic assistants.

We also talk about the trials during our monthly staff meetings and send intra-office e-mail updates detailing the criteria.

LONG-TERM BENEFITS

Involvement in trials elevates the practice as a whole. It gets us in print. Our name appears in the study publication and it gives me, as a principle investigator, the opportunity to present the outcomes at meetings, which leads to greater visibility for our practice nationally. It's another way of setting our practice apart from competition. **OM**



COURTESY: NATIONAL CENTER FOR COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE (NCCAM)