

Parkinson's Research Needs Control Volunteers

Can People without Parkinson's Disease Participate in Clinical Research?

People who do not have Parkinson's disease (PD) may be surprised to learn that they can take part in PD research. In fact, control volunteers are essential to advancing all types of Parkinson's research and providing investigators with important information.

What Are Control Volunteers, and Why Do Clinical Studies and Trials Need Them?

In clinical studies, scientists need a measuring stick against which to compare the changes that take place with PD or the effects of experimental therapies. Control volunteers are study participants who provide that standard for comparison.

When researchers match control volunteers and people with Parkinson's, they can evaluate whether differences are due to Parkinson's or another reason. For example, they might find differences when analyzing blood samples, or in answers on questionnaires. This type of research could ultimately lead to the discovery of a biomarker — an objective measure to diagnose and track PD.

Why Should I Participate in a Clinical Trial or Study?

Many people who participate in clinical research find it to be an empowering way to contribute to the Parkinson's community, advance science, and learn more about PD and the latest research.

How Are My Rights and Safety Protected in Clinical Research?

Every clinical trial or study follows a detailed plan that describes research procedures and activities. Members of the trial team meet with volunteers to explain this plan, your rights as a volunteer and what to expect. After this meeting, all volunteers must sign an informed consent document in order to enroll. Before research starts, a regulatory committee reviews and approves both the study plan and the informed consent document to ensure that the study is planned to be safe, ethical and appropriate. This committee also monitors each trial's ongoing activities, another step in protecting your rights and safety.

How Can I Find Clinical Trials and Studies to Help Advance Parkinson's Research?

Register for Fox Trial Finder, The Michael J. Fox Foundation's online clinical trial matching tool, at www.foxtrialfinder.org.

