

# Older Adult Research Study Volunteers Help Improve the Health of Future Generations

*At the Sticht Center on Aging, our research mission is to help people stay as healthy and independent as possible for as long as possible. However, we cannot fulfill this mission alone. Volunteers are critical to our success. In fact, without volunteers from Winston-Salem and the surrounding communities, our research studies cannot even take place.*

A research study, also called a **clinical trial**, is a careful, step-by-step process designed to answer questions about a health issue or disease. Research studies are a part of all medical advances.

A clinical trial is a particular type of research study performed in people that is aimed at evaluating a medical, surgical or behavioral intervention. Most clinical trials test a new treatment, like a new drug, diet, or medical device (for example, a pacemaker) as a method for treating a health problem.

Often a clinical trial is used to learn if a new treatment is better and/or has less harmful side effects than standard treatment. Other clinical trials test ways to find a disease early, sometimes before there are even symptoms. Still others test ways to prevent a health problem.

A clinical trial may also look at how to make life better for people living with a life-threatening disease or a chronic health problem. Clinical trials sometimes study the role of caregivers or support groups.

## Why Get Involved?

There are many reasons why people choose to join a clinical trial. Some join a trial because the treatments they have tried for their health problem did not work; others participate because there is no treatment for their health problem. By being part of a clinical trial, participants may find out about new treatments before they are widely available. Some studies are designed for, or include, people who are healthy, but want to help find ways to prevent a disease that may be common in their family.

Whatever the motivation, when you choose to participate in a clinical trial, you become a partner in a scientific discovery. And, your contribution can help future generations lead healthier lives. Major medical breakthroughs could not happen without the generosity of clinical trial participants – young and old.

Researchers need the participation of older people in their clinical trials so that scientists can learn more about how the new drugs, therapies, medical devices, surgical procedures, or tests will work for older people. Many older people have special health needs that are different from those of younger people. For example, as people age, their bodies may react differently to drugs. Older adults may need different doses (or amounts) of a drug to have the right result. Also, some drugs may have different side effects in older people than in younger people. Having seniors enrolled in drug trials helps researchers get the information they need to develop the right treatment for older people.



*Sticht Center provides transportation for volunteers to make it easier to take part in a trial.*



*At the Sticht Center on Aging, we limit the scope of our research to older adults (geriatric research).*