

Focusing on You: Clinical Trial for Breast Cancer Vaccine

Triple negative breast cancer vaccine clinical trial

Dr. Carmen Calfa, a breast medical oncologist at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, provides an update on a clinical trial of an experimental vaccine to stop the recurrence of triple-negative breast cancer.

TRANSCRIPTION

Pam Giganti:

In 2018, Jacki Bennett was the first Sylvester patient in a clinical trial for an experimental vaccine to prevent the recurrence of triple negative breast cancer, which is more aggressive and has a lower survival rate than other types of breast cancer.

Jacki Bennett:

This may not save my life, but I'm hoping it'll save someone's.

Pam Giganti:

In the past two years, Jacki has traveled with her wife, returning to work full time, and her breast cancer has not come back.

Jacki Bennett:

I feel great mentally, as well as physically.

Pam Giganti:

Dr. Carmen Calfa runs the folate receptor vaccine clinical trial at Sylvester. It's designed to stimulate an immune response.

Dr. Carmen Calfa:

That is specific to that folate receptor on these triple negative breast cancer cells. We are hoping that the immune system is trained to recognize those cells and hopefully get rid of them.

Pam Giganti:

Neither Dr. Calfa nor Jacki knows if she is getting the actual vaccine or a placebo, but two years later, they are hopeful.

Dr. Carmen Calfa:

If you feel good and you have no new symptoms and you don't have any new physical findings, then you're likely to be in remission. And that's the case with Jacki.

Jacki Bennett:

Being able to play a part, I feel grateful and hopeful that perhaps this is the one.

Dr. Carmen Calfa:

This is a phase II, meaning that we already know that the vaccine is safe. And now we're looking to see if the vaccine is effective in really keeping these patients

without a recurrence for as long as possible, and hopefully to improve their cure rate.

Pam Giganti:

Jacki feels so good, she's looking forward to traveling again with her wife sometime soon.

Jacki Bennett:

My wife and I's passion is traveling the world and meeting people and experiencing life, and after cancer, it became even more important to do that.

Pam Giganti:

For the first six months of the trial, Jacki, got monthly shots. Now it's every six months, giving her more time to spend with the ones she loves.

Jacki Bennett:

As soon as I was diagnosed, I knew that I wanted to do more than just survive cancer. I wanted to help in any way that I could to advance cancer treatments.