

How Washington's New Law Advances Clinical Trial Diversity

Plus: Watch two videos from the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society that explain why diversity in clinical trials is so important.

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Clinical trials are crucial for advancing cancer care. For individual patients, access to trials can be lifesaving. For researchers and doctors, trials help identify better treatments and cures.

But historically, many groups of people face barriers to enrolling in clinical trials. These groups include people of color, younger patients, older patients, and patients living in rural areas.

Washington state just passed a bill—championed by the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS)—to help ensure more equitable access to clinical trials. The bill makes Washington a leader in improving diversity in trials—and provides a roadmap for other states who want to tackle the issue.

How LLS Helped

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee [signed the bill into law](#) in May. It will make sure that translation services, culturally specific recruitment materials, and electronic consent are available to patients when joining a trial. Language and cultural barriers are often reasons why patients do not join a clinical trial. And with electronic consent, patients don't need to travel to the doctor's office to join a trial. The bill also ensures that cancer research funded by the state of Washington provides those same services to trial participants. To help ensure the passage of these reforms in Washington, the Office of Public Policy (OPP) used several tactics, including:

- Partnering with coalitions and patient organizations to promote the bill, as diversity in clinical trials is an issue that extends beyond cancer patients
- Providing testimony in support of the bill by both [Andrew Cowan](#), an LLS advocate and Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center oncologist and researcher, and [Adam Zarrin](#), regional director, state

government affairs at LLS

- Mobilizing LLS's online advocates to ask their lawmakers to support the bill at key moments in the legislative process

Why Is Trial Diversity Important?

"I see patients every day in clinic who live longer than I thought they would because they got on a study," Cowan testified. "But participating in studies is challenging."

For example, patients may have to travel long distances for follow-up, necessitating plane tickets, lodging, time off from work, or childcare arrangements. These challenges not only affect individuals but potentially hinder researchers' ability to learn how therapies impact specific patient populations.

"Promoting diversity in studies helps ensure that enrolled patients accurately reflect the demographics of our region and ensure equitable access to new therapies for all patients," Cowan said. "This legislation has prompted a meaningful and crucial conversation towards advancing more diverse and accessible clinical trials."

What's Next?

We applaud this progress and are excited about both its implementation in Washington and its potential for broader impact in other states.

But we also recognize that our work is not yet complete. LLS's Office of Public Policy will continue to pursue public policies that advance justice in cancer research and treatment. Learn more about our priorities [here](#).

Want to help? Sign up to be an advocate at lls.org/raiseyourvoice, and we'll let you know when and how you can make a difference.

Learn More

The below video explains barriers that patients often face when trying to enroll in clinical trials:

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<http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/washingtons-new-law-advances-clinical-trial-diversity>