



*National Institute for
Health Research*

Clinical Research Network

Catherine Carpenter-Clawson, Bristol

Research changed my life because... after taking part in a clinical trial as a three year old, it has shaped my life ever since

I was diagnosed with cancer at the age of three. It was a Wilms tumour that I was diagnosed with, which is a type of kidney cancer. I had to have surgery, followed by chemotherapy and radio therapy for about 18 months. The repercussions of that was that I was in and out of hospital a lot as a child.

I guess as you grow up, you're an adolescent, you're interested in that experience and you want to know more about how you were treated and understand how cancer works. Because of this curiosity, I found out I was treated as part of a trial.

As a consequence, I always wanted to work in cancer research. I did a degree in pharmacology and went to work in the private sector as a research manager.

Still, in the back of my mind I knew that this was not what I set out to do. I wanted to work in clinical trials, which wasn't quite what my role involved. So, I started to look how I could get involved in research.

About five years ago I saw a job opportunity as a research administrator with the National Cancer Research Network, as it was then. It was a big step to go from being a manager for a big global company to working as an administrator. My uncle thought it would be career suicide, but I wanted to see what it was like working in a clinical trial setting. So, I applied for the job, which I got. I was very lucky that the Research Network Manager job came up a few months later.



When my Wilms tumour was diagnosed 30 years ago, my outcomes were 50-60% chance of survival. But research has really improved survival outcomes and if a child is diagnosed now at a similar stage and type as mine, their survival chances are over 95 per cent.

This means that for the next generation of children diagnosed with Wilms tumours, their side effects will be much reduced, their treatments will be easier, their journey will be less painful and that's what research does. It really improves things for the next generation of patients.