

Barton doc, Tahoe patients part of national drug study

By Jessie Marchesseau

William Cottrell, a physician at Barton Osteoporosis & Bone Health, is partnering with the pharmaceutical company Amgen to host an observational study for the osteoporosis drug Prolia.

The drug was approved by the FDA and released to pharmacies in 2010. So this is not a trial to see if the drug works or what the side effects are. Rather, observational studies like this one are designed to see if the patients like the medication, if they choose to continue using it, how they tolerate the side effects and other such factors.



William
Cottrell

Cottrell has not only had Prolia available to his patients, but has been educating other physicians on the drug for more than a year.

“I do it for the mental stimulation and satisfaction,” he said of teaching other doctors about prescription medications. “There is nothing more rewarding than educating your peers to their satisfaction.”

Prolia is not the first prescription drug Cottrell has chosen to learn and subsequently educate his peers about. He says

doing so allows him to learn all the ins and outs of a medication and find the answers to questions he may never have thought to ask.

“There are some physicians that are much more curious than others, and I’m a very curious guy,” he told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The reputation and relationships Cottrell developed among the medical science community from doing such presentations prompted Amgen to approach him about participating in the Prolia study.

At a couple presentations and conferences over the years, Cottrell had also crossed paths with Doreen Spires, a former research biologist and the current clinical research coordinator for the study. With a background in pharmaceutical research and 16 years of investigating bone density issues, Spires was an ideal candidate to partner with Cottrell for the Prolia study.

However, an invitation from Amgen was not enough to earn Barton Osteoporosis & Bone Health a spot among the 90 participating facilities in North America. They had to meet a set of strict guidelines put forth by the pharmaceutical company as well as pass an inspection including the Barton pharmacy and lab. Cottrell, Spires and Barton passed on the first try.

“Even the study coordinator said it was very unusual to pass the first time,” Cottrell said. “It was a compliment not only to me, but to the hospital.”

The study will observe 600 patients nationwide, of which Spires and Cottrell were asked to observe 10. However, patients’ response to the study far exceeded the team’s expectations.

They signed up three the day the study began in September 2011. The other seven spots filled up in no time, so they

asked for 10 more. The request was granted, and again, the spots filled quickly. When they requested five more, Amgen granted them 10. Though they have not reached their 30-participant threshold yet, Cottrell and Spires will be signing people up through the end of March.

“The benefit to the patient is that they’re helping other patients in the future,” Spires said.

The study will last for two years with participants receiving injections of Prolia every six months. The first group of patients are just now coming in for the second treatments. Part of the study is seeing how many participants stick it out for the full two years, but Spires says so far most of the patients are happy with the twice per year protocol of the drug.

This is Cottrell’s first time participating in this type of study, but he is already looking toward the future.

“If they like the way you do things, they ask you to do things down the road,” he said. “And the dream drug for bones is in the pipeline, and Amgen has it.”

For questions regarding the Prolia observational study or to become a participant, contact Barton Osteoporosis & Bone Health at (530) 543.5490.