

# Healthy You

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 **Lehigh Valley  
Health Network**

# Hope Through Research

## A clinical trial provides options for Fabiola Mejia

**Three years ago, Fabiola Mejia felt a lump in her right breast.** A biopsy confirmed her worst fear—the most advanced kind of breast cancer (stage IV). Mejia elected to have surgery, radiation therapy and chemotherapy at Lehigh Valley Health Network. “I was cancer-free after treatment,” says Mejia.

Last April, Mejia’s cancer returned. Her hematologist-oncologist, Suresh Nair, MD, determined that Mejia would be a good candidate to participate in a breast cancer clinical trial at the health network. “For patients like Mejia with advanced cancer, often the best treatment options are as part of a clinical trial,” Nair says.

Cancer clinical trials are conducted to help medicine learn more about cancer treatments, prevention, detection, diagnosis and quality of life. Trial participants have access to the latest interventions, and their participation may benefit them and people who will need cancer care in the future. You may choose not to participate. Or if you choose to participate, you may stop participating at any time during the trial.

“Before a patient starts a trial, a doctor will sit down with her and review all potential outcomes and options,” Nair says. “Every patient is unique, yet in many situations the trial offers that patient better options.”

Mejia, 42, of Allentown, fit the specific criteria for a breast cancer clinical trial that is testing the effectiveness of a combination of chemotherapy and a medication called insulin growth factor receptor inhibitor. Still she faced one other potential barrier—she speaks only Spanish.

To bridge that gap, Nair connected her with Yasmin Candelo, RN, a bilingual cancer clinical research coordinator with the health network. “I discussed the clinical trial with Fabiola, answered her questions and connected her with any resources she and her family needed,” Candelo says.

Mejia chose to enroll in the trial and is grateful to have Candelo with her at each appointment. “She helps with the language barrier,” Mejia says. “She has an understanding of what I’m going through.”

Enrolled in the clinical trial since May, Mejia feels better and is optimistic about her future. As the mother of five children, she hopes her cancer goes into remission again. “I won’t go anywhere else for treatment,” Mejia says. “I’m receiving the best care here.”



**Next Step:** Watch a video where Suresh Nair, MD, discusses cancer research. Visit [lvhn.org/healthyyou](http://lvhn.org/healthyyou) or call 610-402-CARE.

### About Cancer Research

The clinical trial Fabiola Mejia chose is made possible thanks to the health network’s selection into the National Cancer Institute Community Cancer Centers Program (NCCCP). As one of only 30 sites nationwide in this program, the health network brings the latest clinical trials from NCCCP comprehensive cancer research facilities here to the Lehigh Valley so people don’t have to travel far from home.

The health network also partners with the H. Lee Moffitt Comprehensive Cancer Center and Research Institute in Tampa, Fla., expanding the potential for patients in the Lehigh Valley to enroll in clinical trials.



**Working together to fight cancer**—Support from cancer clinical research coordinator Yasmin Candelo, RN (left), provides hope and guidance to Fabiola Mejia of Allentown.

