



Triathlon Heroes Help Educate Public to Increase Participation in Clinical Trials

By Susan Linder-Hauser, PPD Principal Training Specialist



The demands and rewards of an iron distance triathlon are reason enough for tears and smiles on race day. Yet two days before the 2011 [PPD Beach2Battleship Triathlon](#), the tears and smiles were prompted not by overcoming the aches and pains of the body, but by the inspiration of the heart.

At the PPD Hero Awards, a remarkable ensemble of everyday people and medical specialists shared their [inspiring personal stories](#) of surviving life-threatening

diseases and caring for patients facing serious illness.

Hundreds of PPD employees and guests listened in rapt attention at PPD's global headquarters in Wilmington, N.C., as the PPD Heroes spoke of the mission they share: educating the public about the vital role of clinical trials in improving health and saving lives. There were few dry eyes in the house.

Their words provided me special motivation on race day, when I biked 56 miles as part of a relay team with my PPD colleagues Kristin Hall and Jessica Coppola in the half iron distance triathlon event. When the going got tough on the bike, thinking of the [PPD Heroes](#) helped me push through.

As a PPD employee with 15 years of critical care and therapeutic experience and 14 years in the clinical research industry, I'm acutely aware of the importance of clinical trials in helping develop life-changing therapies.

As a critical care nurse, I witnessed the value of clinical trials in my experience with patients and families. I've seen the value of clinical trials as a clinical research associate and as a trainer in good clinical practice, working with doctors, nurses, field workers, data managers and lab specialists around the world.

In my view, not enough people participate in clinical trials. Not enough people are aware clinical trials may be an option for them or have the information they need to make an informed decision.

A [recent article in the *Annals of Surgery*](#) reported that less than 1 percent of cancer patients reviewed had enrolled in clinical trials, raising questions about whether a "vast underrepresentation by age, cancer stage and site" could jeopardize "the generalizability of these trials to a real world perspective."

Despite noteworthy efforts made by a number of organizations and individuals, much work lies ahead to educate the public about this important topic. This is where the PPD Heroes come in.

As title sponsor of the PPD Beach2Battleship Triathlon, ranked among the world's best iron distance events, PPD has created an opportunity to spread the word about the significance of clinical trials and the importance of increasing participation.



Clinical trials can provide cutting-edge treatment when standard therapies fail. Patients can access new research treatments before they are widely available, and be under close medical supervision. Participants can help others by contributing to medical research.

I am truly inspired by the PPD Heroes – by their personal strength and dedication in surviving serious illness and helping patients, and by their ability to compete in this iron distance triathlon.

I hope you will join us for the PPD Beach2Battleship Triathlon next year as a volunteer, participant or perhaps even as a PPD Hero. It will be an experience of a lifetime. And by raising awareness, you may help save a life.

Share your story. Email ppdbeach2battleship@ppdi.com