Clinical trials play a key role in patient care, academic education and research in surgery. Without valid studies the practice of evidence-based medicine is limited. Surgery is supported through funding by the German Ministry of Education and Research to establish an infrastructure for clinical trials. So far seven universities have worked together in a network since 2007 and successfully obtained funding for six large randomized trials from a program existing since 2004. Until now 2,249 patients have been randomized within 11 trials and 910 patients have been treated at local hospitals without academic responsibilities. An increase in the interest in clinical trials in daily practice has resulted through the certification of hospitals for special treatment that specifies that at least 5% of all patients are included in clinical trials.