

Scientific Marketing Offers a New Way to Get to Prescribers

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A well-trained sales force is an essential tool for disseminating product information and directly assisting physicians in understanding and using your product. But while traditional marketing activities, such as journal advertising and CHE, have satisfied the objectives of the pharmaceutical industry in the past, the paradigm is encountering significant challenges, both with specialists and family physicians.

Restrictions on promotional activity have changed the nature and type of interactions permissible between industry and physicians.

Significant numbers of new drug launches over the past five years have resulted in physicians being inundated by pharmaceutical messages. Some physicians do not

see pharmaceutical representatives at all, while others have little time to share with the numerous representatives competing for their attention.

For company reps, there is a constant challenge in finding fresh messages to bring to their targeted physicians, especially when a product is in midlife cycle.

Scientific marketing—the use of post-marketing or Phase IV studies and registries (such as quality of life and retrospective studies and direct-to-patient programs)—offer effective mechanisms for increasing both physicians' and patients' exposure to a specific medication and building brand loyalty.

Phase IV studies can provide valuable information about a

Table 1

Phase IV trials vs. traditional sales & marketing approaches

	Phase IV trial approach	Traditional sales & marketing
Image	Scientific	Promotional
Physician interest	Usually good	Depends on relationship with company reps; there are many "no see" physicians
Physician communications	Focused on trial, but includes messages about outcomes, economics & clinical use	Content of product monograph; many restrictions on venue and content of message
New drug launch	Presents rapid opportunity for product use in a structured trial	Focused on product messages and acquainting physicians with proper use
Mid- and late-life cycle drugs	Opportunity to show use of drug in clinical guidelines (within indication), as well as demonstrating differences with competitors	Limited by message in product monograph
Regulatory requirements	Section 9 of Rx&D Code, ethics review	PAAB, Rx&D
Cost	Budget is variable based on scale and is limited to the length of the project	Difficult to quantify, as there are large, fixed, ongoing costs

treatment, including physician prescribing patterns, safety and effectiveness, quality of life, satisfaction and cost-effectiveness.

A scientifically oriented Phase IV trial presents pharma companies with numerous benefits. Information from the trial offers an opportunity to engage the physician's interest and access to his or her time, while providing a credible way of transmitting the main value propositions of the product.

Phase IV trials also allow physicians to observe a drug in action. The projected image is of a pharma company that has a sound product and an interest in advancing physician practice and clinical use of medicines. A well-run trial is a good opportunity to enhance the representative-physician relationship.

When considering whether to dedicate a portion of your budget to a Phase IV trial, it is important to remember these trials are not a free license to promote your drug. The information generated should be relevant to the product in question and sales reps need to be educated appropriately.

Section 9 of the Rx&D Code, which governs these initiatives, requires the involvement of sales representatives be restricted to the delivery of materials; they may not manage the trial or pressure physicians to participate.

In addition, for a well-designed trial effort to succeed, planning must involve marketing, sales and clinical research groups within a company. Ethics submissions, protocols and other trial-related materials need development. This requires the committed involvement of the company's clinical department or a

clinical research organization knowledgeable in the Phase IV area.

None of the above is meant to suggest abandoning traditional marketing methods. Scientific marketing still requires the involvement and commitment of sales forces. However, an effective marketing mix balances traditional methods with scientific marketing, providing the most efficient use of budgets in reaching physicians.

Table 1 summarizes and contrasts the differences between using scientific marketing and traditional methods.

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If you would like to discuss scientific marketing opportunities for your product, please contact Ravi Deshpande at 1-800-811-9880, ext. 102, or at rdeshpande@phase4health.com.

Phase 4 Health Inc. (P4H) is a leading outsourced commercialization partner to the biopharmaceutical industry. The P4H multidisciplinary team's proven experience and know-how help clients bring products to market faster and improve their performance throughout their product life.

In the October 2004 issue of *Canadian Pharmaceutical Marketing*, the contact information for Phase 4 authors was incorrect. The correct e-mail addresses are: Ravi Deshpande, rdeshpande@phase4health.com, and Sabrina El-Chibini, sel-chibini@phase4health.com.

We apologize for the error.