

How to Increase the Depth of Your Knowledge and the Value of Your Presence:

Be Familiar with Emerging Trends



Garry Foster,
Senior
Advisor, IsaiX
Technologies

As the gulf between physicians and pharmaceutical professionals widens, forward-thinking professionals need to view this transition as an opportunity, not a liability.

Everyone wants to see a doctor. A doctor's time is a more valuable commodity now than ever before. Patients, finding it difficult to speak with their doctor due to time constraints, are turning to their pharmacists. They want product knowledge. We all want more knowledge—and we want systems that save time. Here lies the opportunity.

Think about the pressures changing the industry. Many large pharmaceutical firms are downsizing to become more efficient and to remove dangerous overhead—the cancer in corporate profits. Drug development has become highly costly. Generic drugs wait in the wings to capture market share as patents expire. Smaller clinical research firms are commercializing existing medicines for new indications. Meanwhile, regulatory restrictions have increased pressure on manufacturers to keep ties to physicians at arms length.

Where do we go from here? Education. Industry knowledge. Become informed. Increase the depth of your knowledge and the value of your presence. There are a number of means by which this can be accomplished.

Read related trade journals and gain an understanding of the newly-emerging tools for both marketers and healthcare providers.

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EBM

For instance, in a sales role, gain familiarity with evidence-based medicine (EBM), which is becoming more prevalent in healthcare practice. Learn to understand the protocols by which physicians reach an informed decision about a patient, to produce optimal patient care and outcomes.

Part of the challenge is to understand how the application of EBM determines patient care. To participate in a meaningful discussion, one should understand:

- The fundamentals of clinical trial design
- How the drug development process unfolds

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- How to correctly interpret findings
- How the results can be applied safely

As with any clinical tool, pharmaceutical professionals must be familiar with the pros and cons of EBM in order to ensure fair balance in discussion. How is the physician assessing, diagnosing and treating each case? A better understanding of this procedure will reveal specific opportunities for discussing physicians' beliefs, or the preferred methods supported by evidence in the trials behind the product. Pharmaceutical professionals must be able to recognize how, when, where and to what degree each practitioner is aware of—and applying—EBM in his or her practice.

The role of EBM in a clinical setting

The healthcare professional brings extensive experience to bear on each step of patient evaluation and management. In this challenging environment, physicians use resources available from medical literature to online reference guides. But with increased patient loads and less time for reading and research, physicians are relying more on standards of practice and recommendations from colleagues and specialists they trust.

The ability of pharmaceutical professionals to understand this procedure and the role of EBM in a clinical setting will have an impact on how healthcare practitioners view your role—and the role of your products—in their practice.

EBM enables physicians to leverage clinical research and expertise with patient-centric decision making. Physicians may or may not consciously employ the steps of the EBM process.

Effective listening and questioning skills can help pharmaceutical professionals identify facsimiles of the EBM process in their discussions with prescribers.

EBM training

To gain a better understanding of EBM, there are a number of resources available. In both the Montreal and Toronto areas, EBM seminars are led by prominent physicians who

understand the value of EBM and how it is applied in a clinical setting.

The practical nature of an EBM course is what makes it so valuable in the field. "It's the application-oriented design," explains Marc Lalande, General Manager of the Council for Continuing Pharmaceutical Education (CCPE). "It gives you tools to enhance your credibility in the area that resonates the highest with your customers."

Understanding EBM provides a foundation for understanding which clinical trial designs offer the best evidence to support a treatment option. Trial tools (*i.e.*, randomization, blinding, control, placebo, *etc.*) all influence the decision-making process by physicians. One should know how to interpret a clinical reprint. What are the results of a study? Are they valid? Is the study population similar enough to the patient that the results are applicable? Are there adverse effects? Know how decisions are made that are most likely to benefit the patient that are cost-effective and do the least harm.

Dr. David Fitchett, a Cardiologist from St. Michael's Hospital, Toronto, Ontario, whose research interest is clinical trials in acute coronary syndromes, has developed with Burlington's Pharmahorizons EBM seminars complete with case studies and opportunities to interact directly with him in a classroom setting. Dr. Richard Gallo, a Cardiologist and Clinical Researcher at the Montreal Heart Institute, will work with attendees from the Montreal area.

New tools for doctors

It is important to understand the range of new tools available to help people become more efficient. Doctors, besides having heavy patient loads, are striving for efficiency by reducing lost time spent managing overlapping schedules and on-call shift work. Companies such as Chyma Systems have introduced on-line communications tools for doctors that create and manage on-call shifts, allowing them to:

- create calendars of events,
- maintain audit trails for billing purposes and
- hold secure discussions with colleagues about medical histories and procedures anywhere in the world more easily.

Momentum is also building for applications that use two-way video conferencing. This allows remote regions to have access to specialists in larger cities. Electronic medical records allow quicker access to files for emergency physicians seeing patients for the first time. Lab x-rays or ultrasounds no longer need to be couriered. Long delays are avoided when images are delivered electronically to desktops and laptops.

Be familiar with these emerging trends as doctors are not always able to keep abreast of the market or understand what is involved in transitioning from paper-based systems to electronic office systems. Improving one's relationship and value to a physician means being prepared.

Navigating clinical reprints

A deeper understanding of clinical reprints is a must. One should learn to quickly and efficiently identify such things as the key

points to present in a reprint. IsaiX Technologies developed an Interactive Reprint Guide that takes complex messages and makes them simple to understand and easier to navigate. Commonly used for text-dense clinical documents, the IsaiX reprint tool creates portable e-learning formats that render large files obsolete.

Competency training

For a field manager, you can increase the overall effectiveness and productivity of a sales force using Coach assessment tools. Managers can assign employees interesting online activities to develop competence in assigned tasks. As an activity management system, Coach can produce rapid reports for immediate feedback to managers. By analyzing the quantitative information received, the Coach application helps sales managers evaluate competency and then recommends actions and steps that can help to measurably transform

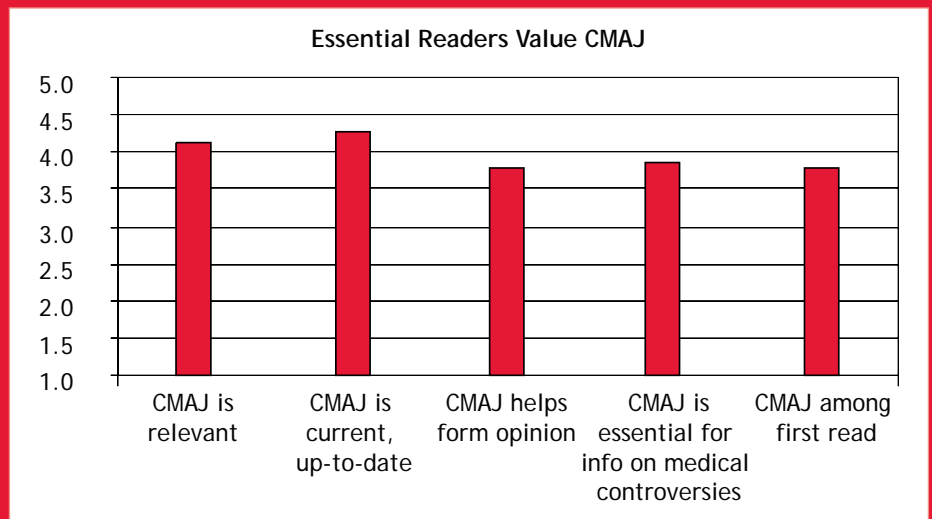
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In a time when industry codes are putting more barriers between representatives and the doctor, it is important to understand the changes that are transitioning the way healthcare is being provided. Strengthen the bond that brings you together; broaden your knowledge and raise the value of your presence.

Transition to clinical support model

As the demand for specialized therapies grows, increasing demand for more accurate knowledge also grows, requiring agencies to hire more specialized representatives with a deeper understanding of their needs. Traditional office visits and direct marketing will move aside as e-mail, electronic records, websites and relationship marketing play a more prominent role. Deeper product knowledge and the means to improve efficiency are both needed.

Tools for secure communication are rendering redundant paper systems obsolete. Digital formats

are more easily transferred from one location to another. A few of the changes transitioning healthcare are:

- online discussion forums and advisory board meetings,
- electronic patient schedulers,
- on-call schedulers,
- electronic patient records,
- video conferencing and
- e-mail appointments.

Remember, you want to improve your relationship and value to a physician. Doctors are urged to base prescriptions on medical evidence over marketing. That means being prepared. In this transition, one's role shifts from selling to a clinical support model that provides evidence to support effective decision making. Take this opportunity and bridge the gulf. **CPM**

For more information, contact:

Garry Foster, Senior Advisor

IsaiX Technologies

Montreal, Ottawa, Burlington, Victoria

Tel: (250) 727.9587 or garry.foster@isaix.com

Improve your knowledge of the pharmaceutical industry

Introduction to the Pharmaceutical Industry in Canada

June 12-13, 2007

This two-day seminar provides an introduction to the structure and operations of the pharmaceutical industry in Canada. It is targeted to those new to the pharmaceutical industry that need a basic understanding of the processes taken and challenges faced by pharmaceutical manufacturers in bringing a product to market. It is also for those in business who want to better understand what drives this regulated industry. The course aims to enhance attendees' understanding of the basics of the pharmaceutical industry, its vocabulary, business drivers, new trends and directions, and how it operates in today's global economy.

Demystifying Clinical Research

June 5-6, 2007

This two-day seminar provides non-clinical research professionals working in the pharmaceutical industry (or a related field) with a basic understanding of the concepts and methods used in clinical research. At the end of the course, attendees will be able to understand basic concepts in pharmacology, biostatistics, and data interpretation, and interpret results related to design and analysis routinely presented in scientific literature.

Brand planning for the Pharmaceutical Industry

May 29-30-31, 2007

This three-day seminar provides an understanding of what drives a successful product plan. At the end of this course, attendees will get to know the fundamentals of successful brand planning, better comprehend market and competitor dynamics, identify key stakeholders and anticipate their impact on brand performance, and know how to rally internal resources for planning and implementation.



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