



Current Practices and Perception of MSL On-Boarding Therapeutic Training in the Pharmaceutical Industry

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Background

The Medical Science Liaison role has been rapidly expanding in the past decade. Between 2005 and 2007, the top 25 pharmaceutical companies saw a 133% increase in their dedicated MSL team sizes.¹ Most pharmaceutical companies have established a formal new hire training process to ensure that their MSL's are ready for the field, but this process varies among different companies.²

Though there has been a study that discusses some general MSL training practices and perceptions, there is little data that discusses specific modalities and tools used to train new-hire MSL's.³ For the purposes of this research, MSL On-Boarding Therapeutic training is defined as product and disease state training conducted within the first 6 months of hire.

Objective

- To determine whether there is a high correlation between the most frequently used and most valuable methods and types of MSL on-boarding therapeutic training and formally evaluated knowledge assessments, from the point of view of the MSL.

Methodology

An anonymous, web-based survey consisting of 24 questions was distributed to medical science liaisons at 31 pharmaceutical and biopharmaceutical companies. This distribution was done via e-mail and included a request to forward to other MSL's at the respondent's discretion. The survey was designed to capture demographics, currently used MSL on-boarding training methods, and opinions of MSL's in regards to on-boarding training. Respondents were not required to answer every question. This research was IRB reviewed and received exempt status.

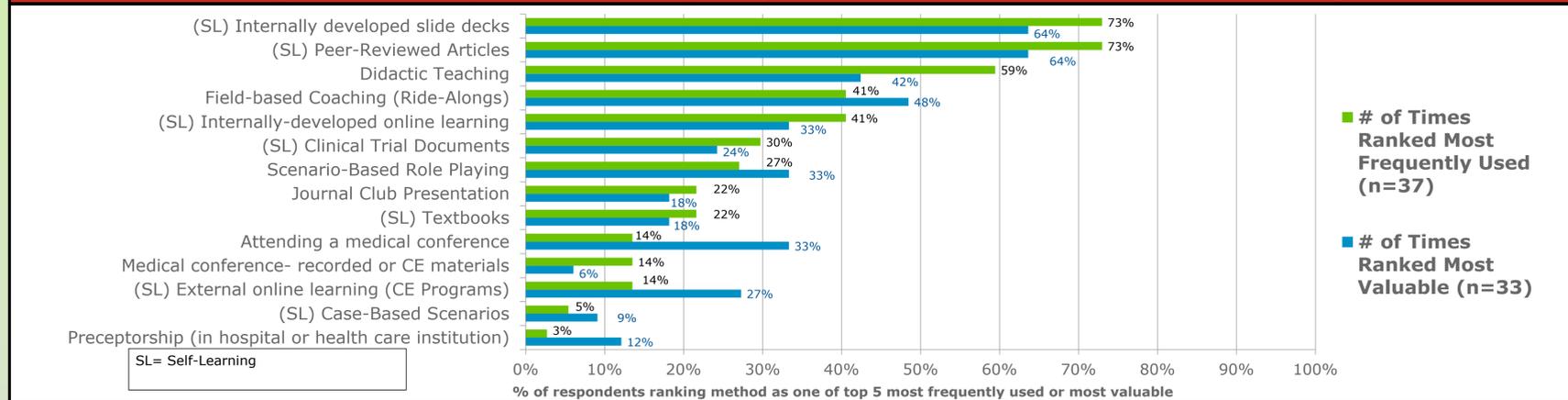
Respondent Background

- There were 54 total responses received from 16 distinct pharmaceutical and biopharmaceutical companies.
 - 46 respondents (87%) completed the entire survey.
- 46 respondents (87%) reported that they are currently working as an MSL.
- 35% of respondents have worked as an MSL for >10 years.
 - 21% have worked as an MSL for 6-10 years.
 - 44% have worked as an MSL for <6 years.

Results

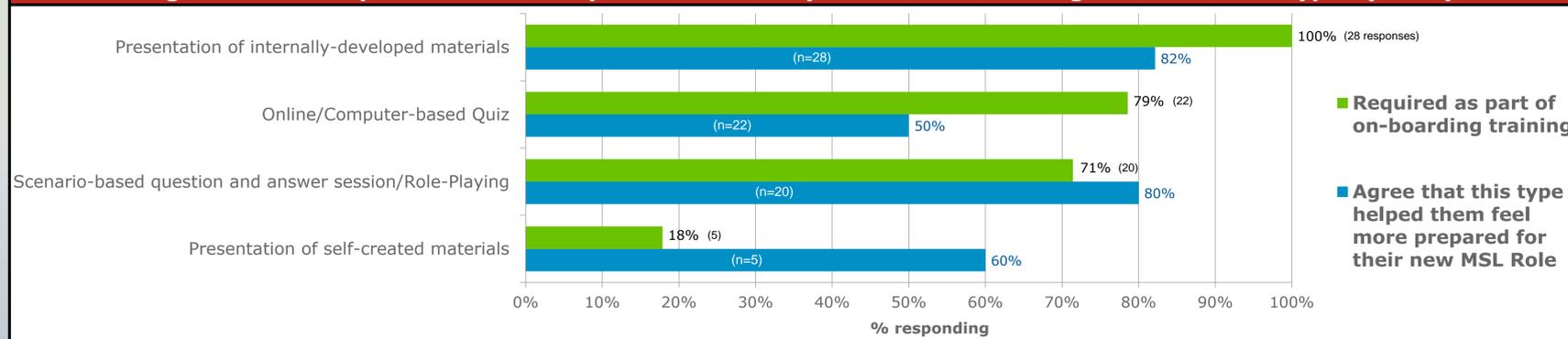
- 85% of respondents (n=46) reported that they had received formalized on-boarding therapeutic training at their current company.
 - Out of the 16 distinct pharmaceutical companies represented by the respondents to this question, MSL's from 12 (75%) of them reported having formalized on-boarding therapeutic training.
 - Responses differed for this question in 2 of the 16 companies, but the response representing the majority for that company was used for the previous calculation.
- Figure 1 depicts answers to two survey questions: how many times each individual method of training was ranked in (1) the top 5 most frequently used and (2) top 5 most valuable.

Figure 1. MSL-Reported: Most Frequently Used and Most Valuable Methods of Training



- 81% of respondents (n=36) reported that formally evaluated knowledge assessments were a required part of their formalized on-boarding training at their current company.
 - Out of the 14 distinct pharmaceutical companies represented by the respondents to this question, MSL's from 12 (85%) of them reported that formally evaluated knowledge assessments were required.
 - Responses differed for this question in 2 of the 16 companies, but the response representing the majority for that company was used for the previous calculation.
- Figure 2 depicts answers to two survey questions: (1) how many MSL's reported use of each individual type of formally evaluated knowledge assessment during on-boarding training and (2) how many MSL's agreed that the particular type of knowledge assessment helped them feel more prepared for their new MSL role.
 - The "n" number for the blue bar represents the amount of MSL's answering "yes" to the first question, thus prompting them to answer the second question.

Figure 2. MSL-Reported: Use and Opinion of Formally Evaluated Knowledge Assessments Types (n=28)



- Out of 50 respondents, 23 former or current MSL's (46%) reported having experience both working for a company that does not require formally evaluated knowledge assessments, and for a company that does require them.
 - 20 former or current MSL's (40%) reported having experience with required formally evaluated knowledge assessments (but not both).
- Out of the 43 respondents with experience with required formally evaluated knowledge assessments,
 - 33 (77%) agreed that the assessments helped them feel more prepared for their new MSL role.
 - 28 (60%) agreed that they would prefer to continue their careers with formally evaluated knowledge assessments.

Discussion

- A large proportion of MSL's surveyed reported receiving formalized on-boarding therapeutic training and being required to take formally evaluated knowledge assessments as part of that training.
- Generally, there is a high correlation between the methods ranked as most frequently used and most valuable; however, there are areas with a >10% disparity.
 - Didactic teaching has more MSL's ranking it as "most frequently used".
 - Medical conferences and external online learning (CE Programs) have more MSL's ranking them as "most valuable".
- Regarding formally evaluated knowledge assessments:
 - Only half of the MSL's that have been required to take computer-based quizzes as part of their training found them to be valuable.
 - Few MSL's were required to present self-created materials, but more than half found it to be valuable.
- Many of the surveyed MSL's agree that formally evaluated knowledge assessments help them feel more prepared for their role as MSL's and would prefer to continue their career with them.

Limitations

These self-reported data may not accurately reflect the most current practices of these pharmaceutical companies.

Conclusion

There are a few areas of improvement for more efficient utilization of certain training methods and knowledge assessments, including increased use of medical conferences and external online learning and decreased use of didactic teaching for training. Regarding knowledge assessments, an increased use of presentations of self-created materials, and a decreased use of computer-based quizzes should be considered.

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