

INTERNET-BASED MEDICAL INFORMATION RESOURCE

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ABSTRACT

Increasing numbers of healthcare practitioners (HCPs) are using the internet as a vital resource to search for medical information. Various medical information departments within pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies have created a searchable database on the internet to allow HCPs to access medical information. Internet-based medical information may provide external HCP customers with an alternate, timely, and convenient method of obtaining medical information.

The objective of this study is to evaluate how pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies are using the internet as a tool for HCPs to access medical information. The research included two phases. A survey phase and an independent research phase. The survey phase entailed distribution of an electronic survey to 50 pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies identified from The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) website to learn about the existence of an internet-based medical information tool as well as its structure and design. In the independent research phase, websites of companies with an internet-based medical information resource were further assessed to establish key features common among them. Study results will provide insight to companies that may consider offering an internet-based medical information resource tool.

OBJECTIVE

- To evaluate how medical information departments within pharmaceutical companies are using the internet as a tool for HCPs to access medical information.
- To evaluate the design and variances of already implemented internet-based medical information websites.
- To provide insight to companies that may consider offering an internet-based medical information resource tool.

METHODS

- Fifty pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies were identified from The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) website.
- Independent research phase
 - The 50 company websites were searched to determine if companies implemented an internet-based medical information resource
 - 7/50 companies were identified as having an internet-based medical information resource
 - 7/50 company's internet-based medical information resource were searched thoroughly and evaluated to determine features and processes common among them
 - Examples include search features, customer tools and the HCPs verification process
- An electronic survey was sent to the 50 pharmaceutical companies
 - The survey was developed to determine if companies implemented an internet-based tool and the structure of the websites
 - Examples include maintenance of website and content of medical information letters placed on the website

RESULTS

Independent research phase

- 7/50 companies were evaluated

TABLE 1 – HCP VERIFICATION

| Verification method | # sites using feature (n=7) | % sites using feature |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| YES/NO verification | 5 | 71 |
| Registration required (including HCP licensure information) | 2 | 29 |

Disclaimers

- Mean number of 5 disclaimers per website
- Most common locations of disclaimers include: HCP verification site, search process and response access page

Delivery of response

- 100% (7/7) companies used Acrobat PDF as the format for delivering response to HCP
- Email/fax was not an option at any websites
- 14% (1/7) websites provided prescribing information along with each medical information letter response

TABLE 2 – WEBSITE FEATURES

| Website feature | # sites using feature (n=7) | % sites using feature |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Medical information request tool | 7 | 100 |
| Chat room | 0 | 0 |
| Call back | 1 | 14 |
| Satisfaction survey/customer response | 1 | 14 |
| Adverse event reporting (1-800 #) | 7 | 100 |

FIGURE 1 – SEARCH FEATURES OFFERED AT WEBSITES

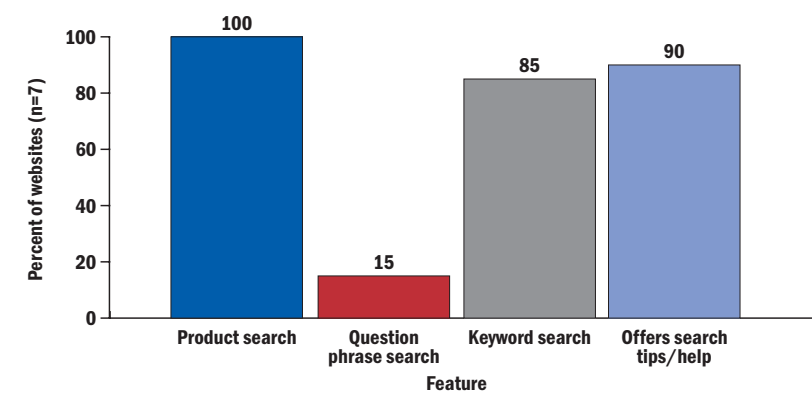
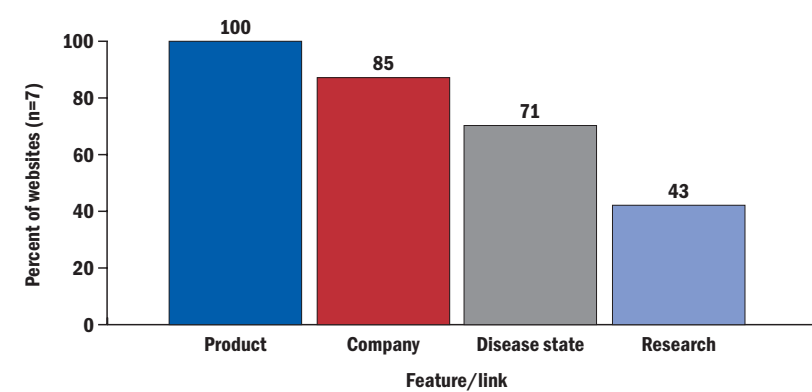


FIGURE 2 – THE MOST COMMON CUSTOMER TOOL LINKS



Survey phase

Response rates

- 34% response rate (17/50)
 - 82% (14/17) pharmaceutical companies
 - 18% (3/17) biotechnology companies

Companies with an internet-based medical information resource

- 29% (5/17) currently provide HCP(s) access to medical information letters on the internet
- 60% (3/5) companies initiated resource 1-2 years ago
- 40% (2/5) companies initiated resource 2-3 years ago

FIGURE 3

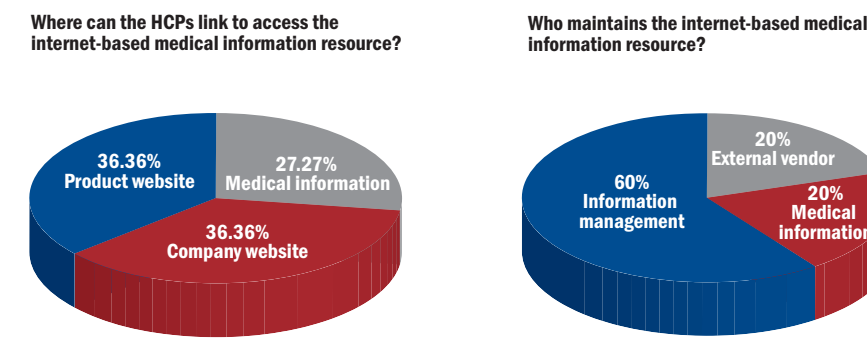


TABLE 3 – CONTENT OF MEDICAL INFORMATION LETTERS

| Content of medical information letters | # sites (n=5) | % sites |
|---|---------------|---------|
| All letters on all products | 1 | 20 |
| Selected letters on all products | 2 | 40 |
| Selected letters on selected products | 2 | 40 |
| Dosing and administration | 1 | 20 |
| Other: pharmacokinetic, general clinical overview and off-label indications | 4 | 80 |

FIGURE 4

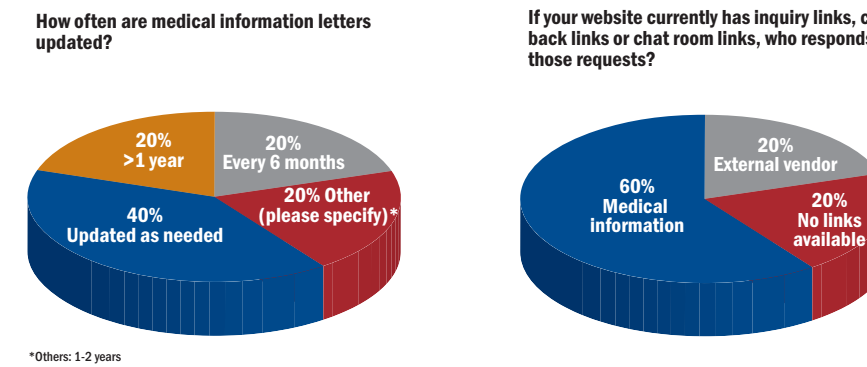
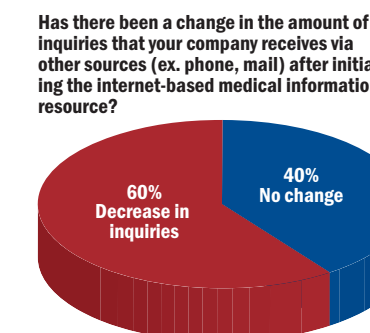


FIGURE 5

Company tracking

- 100% (5/5) companies track the frequency of each medical information letter the HCPs searches, hits, or downloads
- 40% (2/5) track how long the HCP(s) views the letter
- 60% (3/5) do not track how long the HCP(s) views the letter

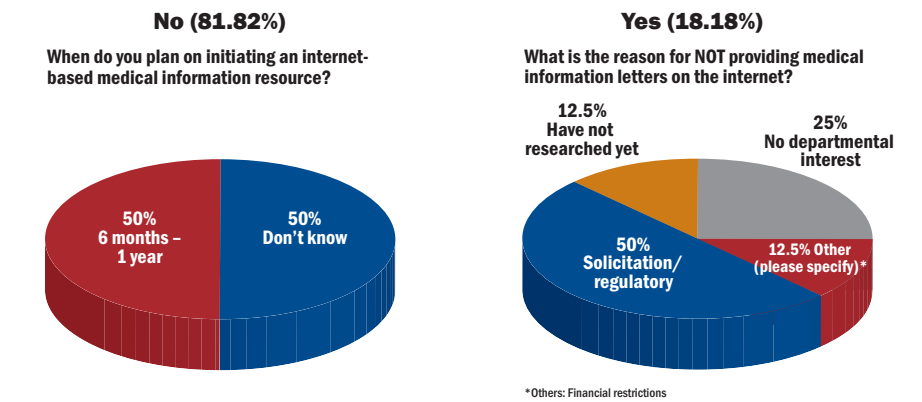


Companies without an internet-based medical information resource

- 71% (12/17) do not currently provide HCPs access to medical information letters on the internet

FIGURE 6

- Has your department considered providing medical information letters on the internet that HCPs can access?



LIMITATIONS

- There was a lack of survey responses from companies with an identified internet-based medical information resource (5/7 companies responded)
- Survey questions were limited to assess full variability of different features from company to company

CONCLUSIONS

- Few companies (14%) currently have an internet-based resource where HCPs can access medical information.
- Most companies have not implemented an internet-based medical information resource due to regulatory and liability concerns.
- HCPs registration is not required at most websites to obtain medical information and disclaimer pop-ups are placed throughout company websites for regulatory and liability concerns.
- The content of the medical information letters available on the internet to HCPs were variable from company to company and survey questions did not assess this variability.
- Companies reported a decrease in the amount of inquiries that the company receives via other sources after initiating the internet-based medical information resource.
- The internet-based medical information resource does provide HCPs with various other tools/links including: medical information request tool, adverse event reporting information, product information, company information, disease state education tools and ongoing company research information.
- The results of the survey and independent research phase may provide direction to companies which plan on initiating an internet-based medical information resource.
- An internet-based medical information resource may provide external HCPs with an alternate, timely, and convenient method of obtaining medical information. Customer satisfaction surveys should be implemented at all medical information websites to assess this.