Analysis and recommendation of virtual medical information for scientific meetings

Bevilacqua A,[1] Xanthos H,[1] Hermes-DeSantis E[2]
[1]Eisai Inc., Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey USA
[2]Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy, Rutgers University, Piscataway, New Jersey USA

BACKGROUND

Many of the top pharmaceutical companies have undergone cost-containment or restructuring in recent years. From a Medical Information (MI) department perspective, the use of virtual medical information* may be a viable option to off-set expenses associated with personnel attendance at medical meetings.

*For the purpose of the following poster, the word **Virtual Medical Information (MI)** will include virtual call centers (ie Webcam/Webex©), audio/video conferencing, web teleconferencing/webcasts, or any other interactive platform where personnel working anywhere in the world can have the ability to store, access, and retrieve data remotely.

OBJECTIVE

- To provide a benchmarking analysis of the utilization of virtual MI technology by pharmaceutical/bio-pharmaceutical companies at scientific meetings.
- To gain perspective on future implementation of virtual MI at Eisai Inc.

METHODS

- A web-linked survey was sent via electronic mail (e-mail) to 30 pharmaceutical companies across the U.S.
- Survey was to be answered by a representative in MI
- Only one response per company was allowed
- The survey consisted of a total of 29 questions; the number of questions posed depended on participants' previous answers
- Survey questions were either multiple choice or open-ended responses
- Study administrator remained blinded throughout the study and results remained anonymous at the end of the study
- Data were collected from December 2010 to January 2011

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Of the companies surveyed, 53% (16/30) responded to the survey
  - 15 (93%) respondents completed the full survey
  - 1 (7%) respondent partially completed the survey
- 100% (16/16) of the surveyed companies have brand name pharmaceuticals with 44% (7/16) of respondents' MI departments supporting more than 20 products

RESULTS

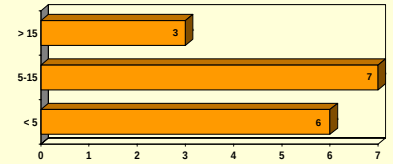
Product Support (n=16)

- 100% (16/16) of respondents support MI for company products in the U.S.
  - 19% (3/16) also support company products globally
  - 13% (2/16) support company products in only some of the countries where the product is approved
- The majority of respondents indicated that company medical information booths at scientific meetings are staffed by both field-based (MSLs) and home office-based personnel (10/16, 63%)
  - 25% (4/16) of respondents report medical booth staffing only by home-office based personnel
  - 13% (2/16) of respondents report medical booth staffing only by field-based MSLs

RESULTS (Continued)

- Excluding fielding-based MSLs, 68% (11/16) of respondents indicated the company sends less than 2 full-time equivalents (FTE) from home-office based MI to staff company booths at scientific meetings.
- Figure 1 shows the approximate number of scientific meetings attended by company MI Departments in 2010

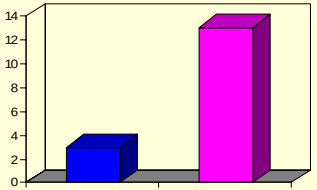
Figure 1: Meetings Attended by Medical Information in 2010



*** Respondents were asked to provide an approximate number. Two respondents indicated number of meetings attended will trend downward in 2011.**

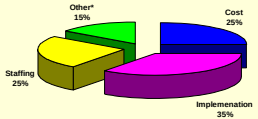
- Figure 2 shows the current use of virtual MI at scientific meetings

Figure 2: Current Use of Virtual Medical Information



- 19% (3/16) of participating companies indicate using virtual MI technology
  - 23% (3/13) plan to consider live face-to-face teleconferencing in the future
- Figure 3 shows perceived challenges of respondents in implementing virtual MI

Figure 3: Perceived Challenges†



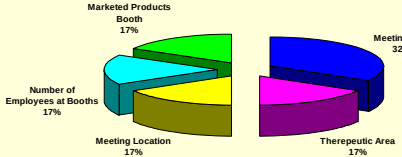
† Respondents who either are not currently using or are not considering use in the future (10/16)

* Respondents in "Other" included:
- "Impersonal communication"
- Regulatory Requirements
- Healthcare provider (HCP) adoption

Respondents Currently Using Virtual Medical Information Technology (n=3)

- 100% of respondents (3/3) use this technology for MI dissemination to health care providers (HCPs) at scientific meetings
  - 67% (2/3) disseminate medical information using Cisco Webex© software
  - 33% (1/3) use a web-camera based technology
- 67% (2/3) of respondents currently use the services of in-house Information Technology (IT) department to implement functionality of virtual MI
- Figure 4 shows the criteria used to determine the utilization of virtual MI at meetings

Figure 4: Meeting Criteria



- 67% (2/3) of respondents employ virtual MI at between 1-3 meetings yearly
  - 67% (2/3) of respondents indicated that it took between 6-12 months to implement this type of communication platform
  - 33% (1/3) of respondents indicated that it took >12 months to implement
  - 33% (1/3) of respondents would recommend virtual MI technology to other pharmaceutical companies
- Overall, 63% (10/16) of respondents feel that virtual MI/communication platforms may be useful to disseminate medical information to HCPs

DISCUSSION

- The majority of respondents (77%) report no current use of virtual MI dissemination at scientific meetings; results suggest that widespread adoption of this technology has been limited.
- Respondents of the survey currently using virtual MI technology (n=3) indicated that this technology was implemented for enhancement of scientific exchange, rather than as a cost containment measure.
  - Follow-up studies should be done to evaluate what pharmaceutical companies are doing to offset departmental costs.
- Based on our results, it is apparent that technology that focuses to recreate face-to-face meetings and replaces them with real-time data sharing, including real-time voice/video capture (ie. Cisco Webex©), may be a viable option for use at scientific meetings.
- Users seems to depend on meeting size as one of the determinants in implementation (32%).
- Currently, there seem to be many barriers in implementation by non-users (Figure 3); however, most companies (63%) agree that virtual MI may be useful in today's pharmaceutical environment.
- Future efforts may be able to be devised that both improve the facilitation of scientific exchange as well as reduce conference-related expenses.

LIMITATIONS

- Small sample size due to only 16 out of 30 companies responding to survey, and only 3 out of 16 currently using this technology.
- Data capture did not report meeting attendance in previous year/years.
- Results were self-reported and may not be accurate because the benchmarking tool utilized to evaluate the respondents surveyed has not been validated.

CONCLUSIONS

Today, the role of the MI professional within the pharmaceutical industry will continue to evolve as technology advances. In the advent of social media initiatives such as Facebook© and Twitter©, technology to communicate with healthcare professionals around the world will create instant flexibility and personalization for users to share medical information seamlessly. Additionally, pharmaceutical companies have to ensure that technological innovations implemented at industry booths maintain compliance and adherence to the changing regulatory landscape. The results of this study indicate that although virtual medical information technology has not been widely adopted as of yet, its role is evolving and may play a greater role in the future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS/DISCLOSURES

The authors would like to recognize the following individuals for their contribution to the development of this poster: Ann Hida

Authors of this presentation have the following to disclose concerning possible financial or personal relationships with commercial entities that may have a direct or indirect interest in the subject matter of this presentation:

Anthony Bevilacqua: Nothing to disclose
Harris Xanthos: Nothing to disclose
Evelyn Hermes-DeSantis: Nothing to disclose