Evaluating the Use of Technology in the Dissemination of Medical Information to External Customers

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BACKGROUND

- There is minimal information in the published literature regarding healthcare professional (HCP) preferences in delivery methods for medical information.[1]
- HCPs are increasingly relying on web-based sources to obtain medical information.[2]
- In this changing landscape, medical information departments are utilizing new technologies to communicate information to HCPs.
- Understanding customer preferences can help validate the use of technological innovations in the delivery of medical information.

OBJECTIVES

- To assess current practices for use of technology to disseminate medical information to external HCPs by medical information departments within the pharmaceutical industry.

AND

- To determine external HCP preferences regarding the method of delivery of information provided by the medical information department at Ortho-McNeil Janssen Scientific Affairs (OMJSA).

METHODS

Industry Practices

- A 20-question electronic survey was disseminated via e-mail to 62 contacts in medical information departments from 40 pharmaceutical and biopharmaceutical companies.
- Survey recipients answered 5 questions on demographics, following by a series of branching questions based on utilization of technological platforms by their medical information department.
- The platforms discussed included:
  - 4Q: Medical information websites
  - 3Q: Videoconferences with visual presentations
  - 3Q: Online communication forums (e.g., Sermo™)
  - 2Q: Applications for mobile devices
  - 2Q: Web-based support at scientific conferences

HCP Preferences

- An 11-question survey was distributed via e-mail to 195 HCPs who received information from the medical information department at OMJSA for selected products from 7/1/09 to 10/31/09.
  - 181 HCPs received the survey
- Survey questions included the following:
  - 2Q: Demographics
  - 3Q: Contact with OMJSA and satisfaction
  - 5Q: Preferences in method of receipt of medical information
  - 1Q: Likelihood to use additional electronic methods of delivery

Abbreviation: Q = questions

DEMOGRAPHICS: Pharmaceutical Industry

- Of the 62 representatives from pharmaceutical and biopharmaceutical companies who were contacted, 17 completed the surveyed, a response rate of 27%.
- The majority of respondents (64%, 11/17) identified their companies as having >10,000 employees.
- The majority of respondents (63%, 10/16) indicated that their medical information department received > 2500 medical information inquiries in the last quarter.

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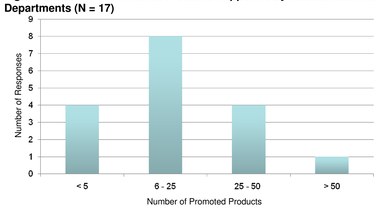
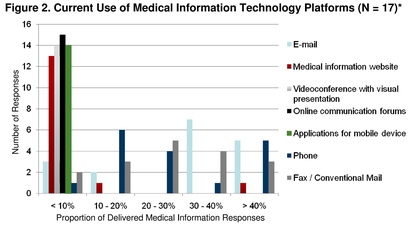
Figure 1. Number of Promoted Products Supported by Medical Information Departments (N = 17)



RESULTS: Industry Practices

Figure 2. Current Use of Medical Information Technology Platforms (N = 17)*

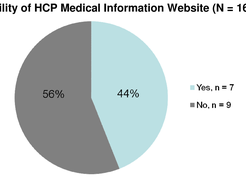


*For medical information websites and online communication forums, N = 15; for videoconferences and applications for mobile devices, N = 14

- For 71% (12/17) of companies, e-mail is used to deliver >30% of medical information responses.
- The majority of respondents utilize newer technological platforms to deliver <10% of medical information responses.

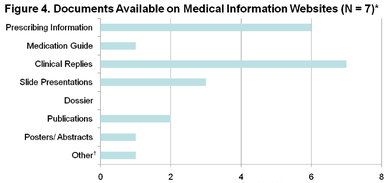
Medical Information Websites

Figure 3. Availability of HCP Medical Information Website (N = 16)



- All respondents (7/7) with HCP medical information websites indicated that the website is not intended for users outside of the United States.
- HCPs can view the following documents on the respondents' medical information websites:

Figure 4. Documents Available on Medical Information Websites (N = 7)*



*Respondents were able to select all that apply.
†The respondent identified "MSDS".

Videoconferences with visual presentations

- One respondent utilizes videoconferences with visual presentations to provide medical information to HCPs.
- HCPs are informed of this option via a specific website to register for videoconferences, via a link on the HCP medical information website, and via the field-based sales force.
- During a videoconference, HCPs can view prescribing information, clinical replies, and slide presentations.

Online HCP forums

- One respondent utilizes online communication forums to communicate medical information to HCPs.
- The content posted to forums is reviewed by the medical department only and the content is identical to clinical replies.

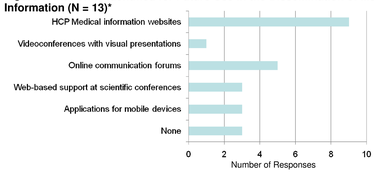
Applications for mobile devices

- One respondent has created an application to provide medical information via a mobile device.

Web-based support at scientific conferences

- 25% (3/12) of respondents utilize web-based support at scientific conferences, which is primarily through access to the medical information website.

Figure 5. Platforms Identified for Future Use in the Dissemination of Medical Information (N = 13)*



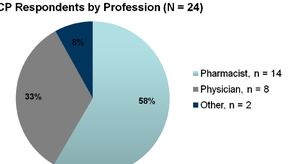
*Respondents were able to select all that apply.

- Nine respondents plan to utilize HCP medical information websites in the future to disseminate medical information.
- Three respondents indicated that they would not be utilizing any of these platforms in the future.

DEMOGRAPHICS: HCP

- Twenty-four of the 181 HCPs who received the survey provided a response, a response rate of 13.3%
- Of the 24 respondents, the majority (58%) listed pharmacist as their profession.

Figure 6. HCP Respondents by Profession (N = 24)

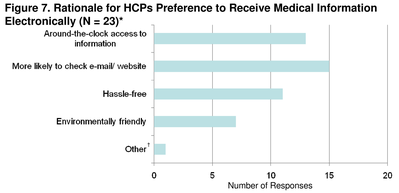


- The majority of respondents (63%) indicated their primary practice site as a hospital or health-system, while 25% of respondents identified themselves as individual practitioners.
- Of the 24 respondents,14 received information from OMJSA via e-mail, 10 received information via conventional mail, and 8 received information via a phone conversation. Respondents may have received information from OMJSA via multiple delivery methods.
- 83% (19/23) of respondents were either satisfied or extremely satisfied with the method by which they received medical information from OMJSA.

RESULTS: HCP Preferences

- 92% (22/24) of respondents prefer to receive medical information via e-mail versus phone conversations, fax, website, or conventional mail.
- Over half of respondents prefer electronic formats due to around-the-clock and hassle-free access to information, or an increased likelihood to check e-mail or a website.
- HCPs indicated that e-mail was the quickest form of delivery and was easiest to store and access for future use.

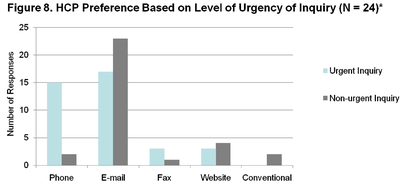
Figure 7. Rationale for HCPs Preference to Receive Medical Information Electronically (N = 23)*



*Respondents were able to select all that apply.
†The HCP identified "ease of filing" as the rationale.

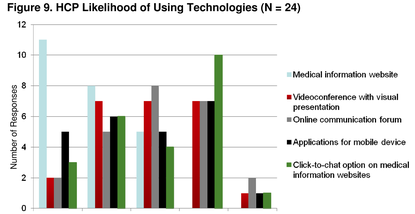
- For two-thirds of respondents (16/24), the level of urgency of the medical information request did not influence their preference in method of delivery.
- For both urgent and non-urgent requests, e-mail was the most preferred method of delivery. For urgent requests, phone conversation was also a preferred method of delivery.

Figure 8. HCP Preference Based on Level of Urgency of Inquiry (N = 24)*



*Respondents were able to select all that apply.

Figure 9. HCP Likelihood of Using Technologies (N = 24)



- When asked their likelihood of using additional electronic platforms to receive medical information, the majority of HCPs surveyed (79%) would be either likely or very likely to use medical information websites.
- For videoconferences with visual presentations and online communication forums, there was moderate interest, with roughly the same number of interested versus uninterested respondents.
- Nearly half (46%) of surveyed HCPs would be likely or very likely to utilize applications for mobile devices, while 46% would not likely use a click-to-chat option on a medical information website.

DISCUSSION

Industry Practices

- The results from the pharmaceutical industry survey provide an overview of technological platforms utilized by medical information departments.
  - For platforms with greater use or interest, such as medical information websites, online communication forums, and web-based support at scientific conferences, there may be value in conducting additional surveys to better understand industry practices.
- The majority of respondents are not implementing newer technologies such as videoconferences, online communication forums, or applications for mobile devices.
  - Additional research should be conducted to identify whether this reflects industry trends or is specific to respondents from this survey.

HCP Preferences

- Despite the majority of HCPs indicating that they would be likely to use a medical information website to obtain medical information, their overall preference in method of delivery is e-mail.
  - The preference for e-mail delivery is related to the need for an "immediate response", hassle-free access to information, and the ability to store the information for future access.
  - These responses suggest that the preference for e-mail delivery over a website may to due to a desire to avoid difficulties in navigating medical information websites.
- HCPs indicated some interest in the use of applications for mobile devices; further studies should be conducted to elucidate specific preferences related to the use of these devices.

LIMITATIONS

- There were a greater number of respondents from companies with >10,000 employees versus smaller companies.
- For the industry survey, it was possible for more than one respondent to be from the same company, potentially leading to bias.
- The HCPs who were contacted for the survey included only those who had documented e-mail addresses available; this may have caused a bias in favor of HCPs who inherently prefer electronic methods of delivery, specifically e-mail.

CONCLUSION

- The results of the HCP survey help determine the utility of the platforms that are being implemented by medical information departments within the pharmaceutical industry.
  - HCPs indicated a strong likelihood of using medical information websites.
  - Of the additional platforms surveyed, respondents were more likely to use applications for mobile devices compared to videoconferences, online communication forums, and click-to-chat options.
- Medical information departments can use this data in determining allocation of time and resources to the development of new technological platforms to disseminate medical information.

REFERENCES

1. Lau J, Patel M, Jindia L, et al. Project Clarity: An on-going initiative to enhance the quality of medical information responses. Presented at the 20th Annual Workshop on Medical Communiciations (DIA); March 1-4; 2009 Hilton Head, SC.
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