

# HOW MEDICAL AFFAIRS CAN HELP TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND COMMERCIAL

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## ABSTRACT

Medical affairs professionals must wear many hats to manage relationships with external experts, develop and present clinical educational information that is both product and therapeutic category specific, publish key data and study outcomes, address internal and external information gaps about products and disease awareness, and support communications platforms for accuracy and consistency. These professionals harness the critical details of product and industry knowledge that are instrumental to practical communications planning and publications initiatives. An effective collaboration between medical affairs and other teams can help to build a strong foundation for product launch, training programs, the development or refinement of informational materials, and effective interaction with external experts. A panel discussion was proposed to identify factors and measures to facilitate sound partnerships and integration between these valuable teams; however, the topic was accepted for presentation as a poster.

## INTRODUCTION

- Medical affairs teams perform a variety of functions and each internal stakeholder plays a key role in establishing and building the foundation for a successful product launch.
- Medical affairs teams are also uniquely positioned to understand the unmet need for patients and to identify key clinical assets in early development.
- With multiple responsibilities, each medical affairs team can maximize the reach of their research and knowledge by establishing a bridge between other internal functions.
- Medical affairs teams can facilitate cross-functional collaboration, enhance internal stakeholder alignment, define scientific and communication points, and promote strategic planning in support of evidence generation.

## OBJECTIVES

- We aim to showcase the key drivers for medical affairs clients and how medical communications can support these drivers, highlighting key tactics to foster strategic alignment between medical affairs and other internal stakeholders.

## METHODS

- A 2-step approach was used to assess the priorities of medical affairs teams and current challenges.
  - Part 1: A sample population of medical affairs clients was questioned on their roles and responsibilities, challenges, and needs for support.
  - Part 2: Client teams within Medical Communications at PAREXEL International were assessed to generate a list of key services provided to medical affairs teams in the first 9 months of 2017.
- Key medical affairs tactics that facilitate alignment and cross-talk with internal stakeholders were identified.

## CONCLUSIONS

- Medical affairs teams are well positioned to engage with the medical community and should have a proactive role in clinical data dissemination and in providing insights to internal stakeholders.
- Medical affairs teams are involved in a number of activities and, based on key priorities identified in the current research, there are still challenges to successfully progressing the drivers for multiple stakeholders.
- Key drivers of medical affairs clients can be aligned with medical communications solutions that facilitate strategic approaches to evidence generation, portfolio management, medical education, external expert engagement, and launch readiness.
- Each medical communications approach should strengthen the role of medical affairs in developing the scientific narrative for each product and in fostering collaboration among cross-functional teams.

### References

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### Acknowledgements

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Scan the QR code to view a PDF of the poster.

## RESULTS

### Medical Affairs Drivers

- Interviews with medical affairs professionals revealed several responsibilities and tactics that continue to be a challenge for medical affairs teams (**Table 1**).
- Key drivers for medical affairs included demonstration of the value of medical affairs activities internally, representing the company as external trusted experts, increased focus on product value, the necessity of patient-centricity, staying abreast of innovative communication channels and data collection methods, medical and regulatory governance, supporting external interactions of medical science liaisons (MSLs), interpreting and addressing the needs of an expanding stakeholder base (internal and external), and participating in pre- to post-launch strategies and delivery.
- A common theme that emerged from the interviews was the importance of medical affairs professionals in fostering a bridge across company functions. This encompassed:
  - Coordinating, developing, and contributing to strategy
  - Gathering insights from external stakeholders and translating these insights for internal functions
  - Sharing medical, scientific, and value knowledge about a product and its competitors

**Table 1. Responsibilities, Tactics, and Challenges for Medical Affairs Teams**

Activities	Tactics and Challenges
Involved in RWE study design and communications	Utilize expert support and guidance to obtain the right RWE and maximize communication
Evaluating strategic alignment of marketing company-driven communications	Ensure marketing companies' communications are aligned to global strategy, evidence-based messaging, and compliance guidelines
Align strategy and tactics across functions within a brand or across indications	Ensure consistency for a portfolio/brand with multiple indications, particularly for fast-paced launches staggered over time
Publication planning and delivery	Identify evidence gaps, guard against compliance challenges, track effectively, publish rapidly, and extend the reach of publications
Working effectively with external experts to gain insights	Identify cost-effective and interactive innovations to supplement face-to-face meetings and facilitate knowledge transfer
Creating activities that align with patient-centric value of the Pharma company	Build activities with patient-centricity in mind
Showing the value of medical activities internally to secure budget	Demonstrate success metrics with strategically aligned, evidence-driven activities
Competitor surveillance and evaluation	Assess impact on the strategic plan, response to competitor activity in line with product strategy, and keeping medical teams informed ahead of interactions with external experts

RWE, real-world evidence.

### Medical Communications Offerings Delivered to Medical Affairs Clients

- Communication tactics supporting medical affairs clients were reported to be [1] internal stakeholder resources (including scientific platforms, lexicons, MSL training, and frequently asked questions), [2] evidence analysis projects (such as therapy-area analyses, competitive intelligence, and gap analyses), and [3] external audience engagement approaches (eg, advisory boards and physician surveys to provide insights as well as communication approaches that included expert videos, patient case studies and interactive media) (**Figure 1**).
- The predominance of internal stakeholder resources delivered supports the important role of medical affairs in internal alignment and information sharing.
- One caveat is that the frequency of these deliverables reflects the stage of the product's life cycle, which differed across clients.

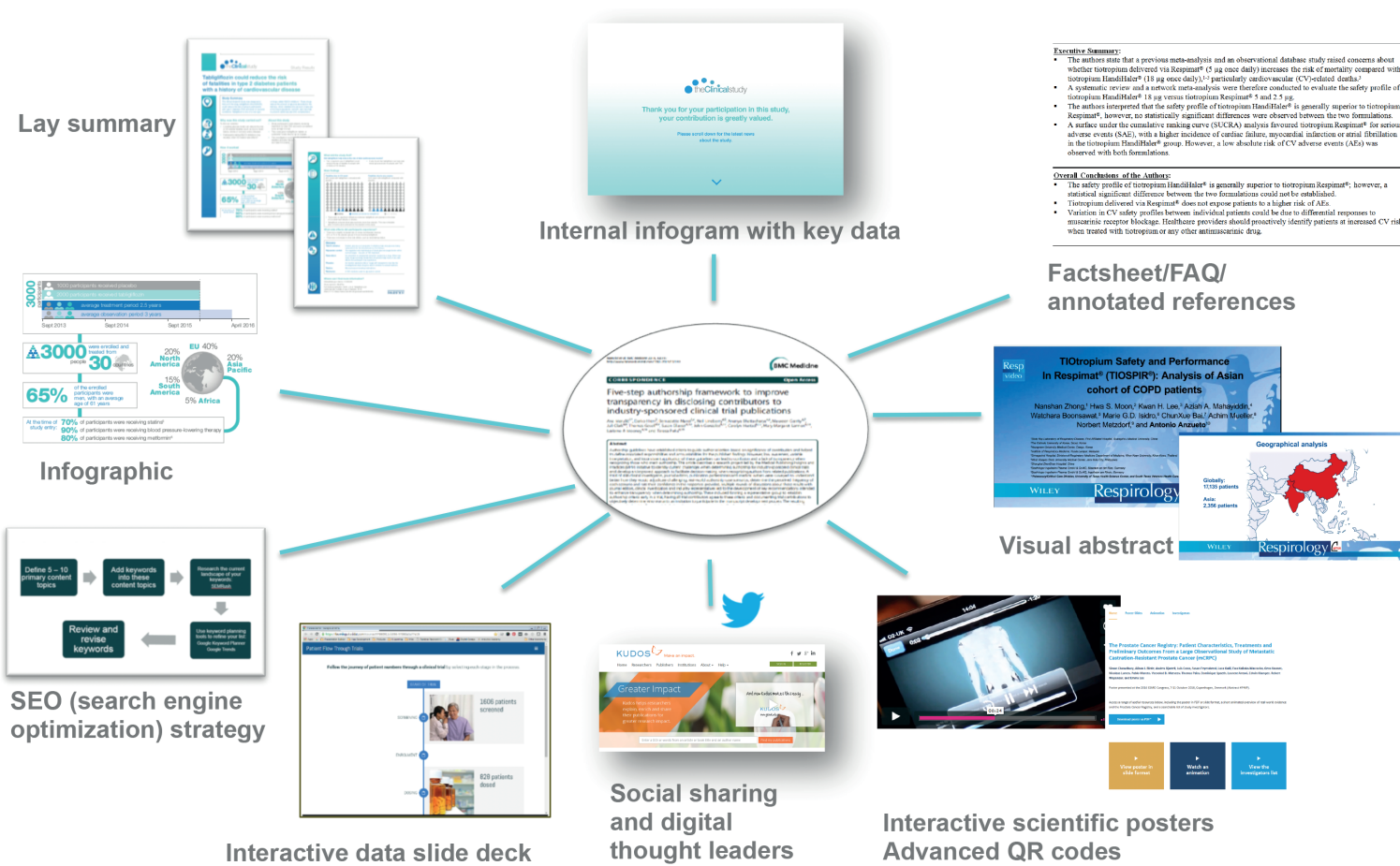
### Strategic Alignment Between Medical Affairs and Cross-Functional Teams

- Specific needs of medical affairs teams for quality and strategic alignment (as mentioned in **Table 1**), can be addressed by scientific platforms.
- Scientific platforms can be used to facilitate internal stakeholder engagement and alignment, particularly within a dynamic, multi-asset environment (**Figure 2**). They serve as the foundation for accurate, consistent communications in both nonpromotional and promotional contexts.

**Figure 1. Medical Communications Offerings for Medical Affairs Clients**



**Figure 4. Opportunities to Extend the Reach and Visibility of Publications**



**Figure 2. Cross-Functional Communication Activities Based on the Scientific Platform**

Press Releases/Internal Communications	Publications	Medical Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Press release content</li> <li>Tactical memos</li> <li>Newsletters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Abstracts</li> <li>Posters</li> <li>Primary manuscripts</li> <li>Reviews</li> <li>Supplements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unbranded booth activities</li> <li>MSL slide decks</li> <li>HCP educational materials</li> <li>Speaker programs</li> </ul>
Promotional Materials	Payer Materials	Field Force Materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Booth activities and materials</li> <li>Speaker programs</li> <li>Symposia</li> <li>Product theaters</li> <li>Nonpersonal communications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educational materials</li> <li>Slide decks</li> <li>Webinars</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal training materials</li> <li>Live training meetings</li> <li>Leave-behind and pull-through materials</li> </ul>

HCP, health care provider.

- Training serves as the foundation of educational programs for MSLs and other field-based staff, such as clinical nurse educators. Interactive platforms provide content in a modular format and accommodate different learning styles using best educational practices. These platforms can also be used to educate and align other internal audiences about a product.
- Along with the need for training is the requirement to keep medical teams informed ahead of interactions with external experts. This is best achieved through rapidly created tools that use a graphic-rich approach to encapsulate the essential facts and interpretation.
- There is increasing focus on integrating patient-centricity into the spectrum of offerings by a pharmaceutical company. Medical affairs deliverables such as Patient Lay Summaries serve to directly inform patients. Lay summaries compile and discuss the results of medical research in nonspecialist language.<sup>1,2</sup> They highlight why the work was done, what was done, what it found, and what it means for patients. They can also have the benefit of letting patients who participated in clinical trials know the outcome and significance of their involvement. Caregivers/family members and other members of the public can be audiences for lay summaries as well (**Figure 3**).
- Publications are at the very center of communications and, as information overload is the default experience of internal and external audiences, it is vital to increase their signal relative to the wider noise. Extending the reach of publications is possible through an array of different methods (**Figure 4**).

**Figure 3. Lay Summary of a Clinical Trial**

