

Does your Field Strategy Empower your Oncology Customers?

Insights for Oncology Medical Affairs Teams



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A recent survey says no.

Drinking from a Firehose

The rapid nature of biopharma development is putting strains on oncologists being able to adapt, learn, and insert new agents into therapy matrices to benefit patients. Your oncology customers are “drinking from a firehose.” In the last 20 years (2000-2020), more than 160 new agents were launched in oncology across the world, and 64 new agents within the last 5 years alone. The price we pay for the pace of innovation is not being able to service our oncology stakeholders in a way that helps them.

Understand oncologists' specific needs

Does a busy oncologist have time to learn all those new treatments and how they will ultimately benefit their patients? A new survey says not without help. This is where a solid medical affairs strategy can help biopharma better meet the needs of their customers. The recently released 2021 Accenture Health and Life Sciences Oncologist Experience Survey ([link](#)) of 120 oncologists across the US and Germany identified some of the most pressing issues they face in the ever-changing landscape of oncology therapy. Let's dive into what they found.



Oncologists Need Scientific Decision Support

What do oncologists surveyed say they need?

Ultimately, it's decision support. Biopharma companies have to tailor their Medical Affairs support in today's oncology world. The needs are specific and easily attainable if you have the right Medical Affairs strategy. And listening to your key customers here offers a significant value if done correctly.

The survey identified four areas where biopharma companies can deliver on oncologist's needs:

1. Patient specific discussions
2. Real World Data
3. Expanded Precision Oncology Support
4. Getting the Basics Right

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-Accenture, 2021





Patient Specific Discussions

So how does biopharma help oncologists with their desire for patient-specific discussions?

Due to the complex nature of therapy and the rapid pace of product development, oncologists in the survey desire a shift from product discussions to individual patient cases. This means not only discussing a product that a pharmaceutical representative is there to support but ALL available agents in the decision tree. This also includes ancillary treatment topics such as genomics and specific biomarkers. This type of discussion takes support out of the wheelhouse of the typical pharma sales rep rather quickly.

FDA regulations on Medical Affairs and scientific exchange have restricted specific discussion of individual patients' case details historically. So how does biopharma help oncologists with their desire for patient-specific discussions?

Development of networks that can link area oncologists together to discuss typical patients can be facilitated by a sound medical affairs representative, such as a Medical Science Liaison (MSL). These "citywide" peer to peer groups are a typical service platform that biopharma can provide a space for these discussions to occur between providers in a transparent way. With the rise of video conferencing platforms, MSLs can link physicians together in different parts of the country or the world to have patient-specific discussions in a compliant way.



Real World Data (RWD)

In the next 10 years, the majority of oncologists surveyed believe that real world data will be as important as clinical trial data in treatment decisions. And the population that believed that the most? The oncologists in Academic Medical Centers, typically the ones running those clinical trials!

RWD was seen as a “top priority” service that biopharma companies can provide (See below for the top 5 list). 65% of oncologists surveyed want to discuss real world data with pharmaceutical representatives, yet most pharma reps are unable to discuss these off label topics. MSLs are in a unique position to offer the scientific expertise and clinical background to absorb RWD and have a transparent conversation about this specific type of data. Optimizing your MSL teams should provide huge value in this area.

The increase in importance of RWD is a shift not to be taken lightly by biopharma companies. Understanding how to generate and disseminate transparent RWD will be a strong differentiator in the future.

Expanded Precision Oncology (PO) Support

The survey identified a “striking difference” between the needs of Academic Medical Center (AMC) oncologists, and community practitioners (CP) when it came to Precision Oncology (PO) support. It showed that PO is typically applied by AMC oncologists, while CP oncologists will need to focus on PO in the future. Biopharma is in a unique position to help CP oncologists implement PO strategies into their day-to-day therapeutic decisions.



Biopharma can tailor different programs, outreach, and messages to support both AMC and CP oncologists as PO becomes more widespread at the patient care level. Having two separate MSL outreach teams or different levels of MSL support for these different customers is a strategy that TMAC has employed with many successful oncology organizations in the past.

Regardless of practice location, an increase in intelligent scientific exchange is needed to offer the tailored and precise support requested by each population.

If biopharma companies can recognize the differences in the needs of each of these and provide tailored support to each population, it will create tremendous value.

Getting the Basics Right

Keep doing the things that work.

Offer oncologists the opportunity to speak to a Medical Science Liaison that is clinically trained and has the scientific acumen for a peer-to-peer discussion.

Discuss products in a holistic way that involves supporting patient assistance to CP oncologists, and PO discussions to AMC oncologists.

Don't forget about the basic support infrastructure that got you to this point. Let's build from here.



How Biopharma can help: The Top 5

The top 5 priority services that biopharma can provide to AMC and CP oncologists according to the survey are:

1. Scientific Exchange on a specific product or indication
2. Discussing RWD for a specific product
3. Providing access to RWD for a specific product
4. Discussing the best treatment option for a specific patient case
5. Information and notice on upcoming treatment

All 5 can be accomplished by a well-designed and executed Medical Affairs Strategy and deploying a strong, capable MSL team. For Biopharma to be able to do this, a stronger focus on medical capabilities will be vital. Are you ready?

That's where we come in

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You need an experienced Medical Affairs Partner

**The data from this survey reinforces the
need for a strong medical affairs strategy.**

Biopharma companies will need a strong MSL team that can dually support both an AMC and CP oncologist strategy or offer split teams that specialize in one or the other. Companies will have to focus on generating RWD, and MSLs will have to be well versed in analyzing and discussing that data. MSLs can offer peer-to-peer network discussions, a space where individual patient case discussions can take place between practicing oncologists without pressure.

TMAC has over 20 years of extensive experience in placing entire oncology MSL teams on a contract or direct hire basis. Only need a CP or AMC specialist in a select area of the country? We can do that too.

Don't have a RWD strategy or don't know where to start? Our consulting business can map out your Medical Affairs Strategy and give you the infrastructure to successfully build on. And once you're launched, we can provide Medical Information Call Center Support, that can further the RWD dissemination and discussion if needed.

TMAC can specifically tailor your oncology Medical Affairs strategy just like your therapies are tailored to specific patients and indications. Let's get to success together.

Inquire about any of our services at: inquiries@tmacmail.com or call 678-581-4400 to speak with our Business Development personnel today.

References:

1. 2021 Accenture Health and Life Sciences Oncologist Experience Survey. Accessed February 8, 2021 at: [\(link\)](#).