

News Sales Reps for a New Era

Jul 24, 2017

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The paradigm of marketing and promotional activities in the pharma field is changing dramatically. Monoclonal antibodies are replacing traditional medicines. Biologics demand huge clinical and research data. Compliance is replacing ethical, self-regulation. Regulatory affairs are becoming more important than traditional market access technologies. Pharmacovigilance requires additional field time with HCPs. And long term-efficacy, overall survival, dramatic improvement of quality of life, and compliance to treatment are now the main positioning statements.

These changes require a new generation of specialists, not only for senior management positions, but also for positions in sales force, project leaders or key account managers. Healthcare professionals want to industry reps who are partners, who are aware of the latest medical trends and guidelines, and who are ready to discuss them in detail rather than promote general sales messages with old-style marketing methods.

As complex biological products and biosimilars replace simple molecules and generics, the work of sales managers moves to a different level. It will be necessary in future for biotech companies to recruit sales reps with master's degrees in medical or pharmaceutical fields, in order to effectively discuss with doctors the mechanism of action of biological medicines, the features of clinical trials, competitive advantages and the prospects for new indications.

The criteria for a medical representative in the era of complex biological drugs will include

- Higher medical or pharmaceutical education (bachelor or master degree, M.D or Ph.D).
- Good knowledge of clinical pharmacology and medical areas such as oncology, rheumatology, cardiology, endocrinology, rare orphan's diseases, osteoporosis, etc.
- Excellent oratorical qualities that will make it possible to briefly and clearly bring to the experts the advantages of the biologic drug.
- In-depth knowledge of competitive medicines and clinical studies.
- Orientation in the latest medical scientific achievements and publications.
- If possible, membership in specialized medical associations.

Recruitment of such specialists will be expensive and will require a serious revision of pharma sales salaries, but if companies do not invest in now, then tomorrow it could lose out to competitors in the field.

Biopharma companies should create their own "colleges" to educate future sales managers, marketers, key accounts, medical consultants in courses on general anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, as well as the basics of clinical aspects of such areas as oncology, rheumatology, diabetes, cardiology or the fields in which the pharma company is specialized.

This would not be a complete medical education of course, but advanced professional training, enabling future employees to be able to deal with doctors and HCPs at the level required by modern medical science.

By investing today in the early stage in professional education of its sales force, a company can secure sustainable business development in the new era of the biologic.

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