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Value-added content solutions for today's crowded communications environment

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Healthcare practitioners are often unable to keep up with advances in care due to the enormous volume of information available and the time required to sift through it and find what is relevant.
- Partnerships with publishers could be a high-impact and effective means for pharmaceutical companies to engage with their target audience in a timely manner.

- According to a report by the *Journal of the American Medical Library Association,* there are over 7,000 articles published monthly in primary care journals.[2] When specialty and general scientific journal publications are added, the number increases significantly—to 28,000 peer-reviewed journals and an estimated 2.5 million articles published annually.[3,4] Given the number of hours that HCPs work—up to 80 hours per week[5]—there is often limited time to sift through the literature, let alone identify what is relevant and find the time to read it

The ease of expanded access to medical literature via a variety of electronic communication channels allows it to reach multiple key stakeholders—healthcare practitioners (HCPs) to inform patient care, third-party payers for evidence that shows the value and effectiveness of therapies, and patients and caregivers who seek knowledge about treatment choices. Of all audiences, however, HCPs are perhaps the most important stakeholders for pharmaceutical companies that seek to share important and evolving data about their products.

Can HCPs stay afloat in the sea of overwhelming scientific information?

According to a survey of 2,708 HCPs, traditional medical journals are a mainstay for HCPs wanting to stay abreast of new and rapidly changing clinical information.[1] However, due to the plethora of information channels afforded by the internet and the time constraints faced by most medical practitioners, busy HCPs may find it challenging to sift through the medical literature to identify what is relevant to them.

The first challenge faced by HCPs is the enormous volume of literature that exists. A frequently cited report in the *Journal of the American Medical Library Association (JAMLA)* noted that more than 7,000 articles are published monthly in primary care journals alone.[2] When specialty and general scientific journal publications are added, the number increases significantly—to over 28,000 peer-reviewed journals with an estimated 2.5 million publications annually.[3,4]

The second challenge to HCPs, as addressed in the *JAMLA* report, is time. The report estimated that primary care physicians (PCPs) would need approximately 300 hours per month to evaluate the PCP-directed publications. Given the number of hours that HCPs work there is often limited time to even sift through the literature, let alone identify what is relevant and spend time carefully reading it.[6,7]

Shifting trends in content consumption

Like the rest of the world, HCPs increasingly prefer to access information digitally. A survey of 506 practicing US physicians, designed to assess patterns of digital uptake, found that 87% of HCPs access information via a smartphone or tablet; spend twice as much time reading online material than print material when making clinical decisions; and perceive online videos as an educational tool that helps them translate information into clinical action. Interestingly, these findings were true regardless of the age of respondents (age groups of <45 years and >55 years).[8] Among HCPs' most common reasons for use of mobile devices are ease of information access and time effectiveness.[9]

> The order of criteria HCPs use to seek online information is the credibility of the source, followed by relevance, unrestricted access, speed, and ease of use.[10]

Given the increased consumption of digital information by HCPs, and the wealth of content providers, the credibility of the information source is more critical than ever. According to a study by Bennett and colleagues, the order of criteria HCPs use to seek online information is the credibility of the source, followed by relevance, unrestricted access, speed, and ease of use.[10]

From HCPs' perspective, the credibility of pharmaceutical industry-sponsored content often depends on the source. According to a 2016 survey conducted by Medical Marketing & Media, pharmaceutical companies can support the needs of HCPs by delivering information via a highly credible, wellrespected source. This online survey of 2,994 US physicians found that 85% would prefer to access pharmaceutical industry-sponsored information via a third-party website rather than from the pharma sponsors themselves.[11,12] This may be the result of the historical approach of industry simply promoting products to HCPs rather than sharing its expertise and scientific data.[13] Thus, it would be advantageous for industry companies to identify alternative approaches to provide information that addresses the needs of HCPs.

The pharma-publisher partnership: a prescription for success

Top-tier peer-reviewed journals, including those associated with medical societies, are a long-standing trusted source of information. The peer-review process provides an unbiased, independent, critical assessment of a manuscript and is, therefore, an important extension of the scientific process.[14] By definition, peer-reviewed journals will publish only articles that meet the standards established for a given discipline; thus, peer-reviewed publications can be considered to embody the best research practices in a field.[15]

By partnering with publishers of well-respected peerreviewed journals, pharmaceutical companies can deliver the results of their sponsored research to HCPs via trusted sources. A major benefit of working with medical journal publishers is that because the publishers stay abreast of content consumption trends, they can guide industry partners on when and how to best reach the intended target audiences. Additional advantages of collaborating with publishers include potential access to existing relationships with journal editors and societies, and the use of novel communication tools that can extend the reach of content beyond that possible with one specific journal.

> Today, publishers of scholarly journals go beyond the journal and offer an array of tools that deliver information to busy HCPs in ways that meet their needs. These tools include microsites, apps, podcasts, webinars, essential knowledge briefings, and content feeds.[16]

Publishers make both their journals themselves and the alternative communication tools available online in a variety of digital formats, which dovetails directly with how HCPs are accessing information. For example, many publishers currently offer multimedia presentations related to key publications on their websites via webcasts that present discussions between authors and other experts. What follows is a real-life example of how one publisher of a medical society journal supported the dissemination of important research to a targeted specialty.

CASE STUDY: Maximizing the benefits of partnering with the publisher of a peer-reviewed journal

THE CHALLENGE

A manufacturer of a surgical wound-closure product supported a meta-analysis of negative-pressure wound therapy (NPWT) for surgical incisions. NPWT is an established approach to reduce post-surgical complications in patients with open wounds. The rationale for the metaanalysis was to explore the possibility of extending the use of NPWT to patients with closed surgical incisions, based on trials reported in the peer-reviewed literature. Given the importance of assessing modalities to help reduce postsurgical morbidities, improve patient outcomes, and manage costs, the authors of the study determined it was essential to publish their findings in a highly credible top-tier journal that would reach the appropriate audience, and with a publisher that could offer opportunities for expanded distribution through multiple channels.

THE SOLUTION

The authors of the study identified BJS, a top-tier surgical journal and the official journal of the BJS Society, published by Wiley, for submission of their manuscript. The journal has a wide global reach of 52,000 readers, mostly comprising surgeons. The publication appeared in the journal in March 2016.

Shortly after publication, the publisher offered the following on their website:

- A link to the full paper
- A dedicated branded topical microsite with
  - A video interview with authors of the meta-analysis
  - Interviews with additional KOLs on the topic
  - Relevant Key Opinions in Medicine (KOM) newsletters
  - A summary report based on an industry-sponsored symposium focusing on NPWT
  - Links to several earlier publications on wound management and the role of NPWT
- A mention and description of the sponsor product in a dedicated section of the publisher website.

THE OUTCOME

The strategic approach to information sharing developed through the publisher-sponsor partnership created a global opportunity for all interested HCPs to access not only the original publication, but also a wealth of associated information that included details on integration of NPWT into clinical practice. It allowed the sponsor to communicate cutting-edge information on wound management to a targeted global audience in formats that could be accessed via computers, tablets, and smartphones, helping busy HCPs receive clinically useful information without having to search for it on their own. The variety of media that was used appealed to the different ways in which HCPs access information: static PDF, video, and graphics. Moreover, since the microsite and all the supporting promotional elements continue to exist online and accrue views, the publisher activities have had a long-lasting reach and impact.

In terms of measuring success of the partnership, the following metrics were reported:

- The article achieved an impressive Altmetric attention score of 517, which, according to Altmetric;
  - placed the article in the top 5% of all research outputs scored by Altmetric
  - was one of the highest-scoring outputs from this source (#1 of 2,238)
  - fell within the 99th percentile compared to outputs of the same age and the 98th percentile for same age and source
- The article was mentioned by 63 news outlets, 40 tweeters in 9 different countries, and 52 Mendeley readers
- The publication was cited 8 times from publication through July 2017.

Thus, the publisher was able to leverage their deep understanding of the medical landscape, their highly knowledgeable and capable team, and rigorous performancetracking measures for their activities to offer unique and high-impact content solutions to the sponsor.

SPONSOR FEEDBACK

Apart from the evident impact Wiley activities had in terms of reach and visibility of the sponsored research, the feedback received from the sponsor was very positive and encouraging:

With Wiley, our objectives are aligned in trying to increase awareness of new and robust clinical evidence. Wiley has brought new insights, ideas, and approaches that have really helped to increase the impact of our new evidence. [...] Key projects with Wiley include the "Key opinions of Medicine series," the "Evidence portal," which is the hub for all our key evidence, and also a number of other tools to help guide clinicians through the evidence that has been published. They have been really well received in the target countries and are being utilized all over the world. [...] We have the skill set to develop materials and assets but by working with Wiley we have developed an understanding of how best to communicate evidence to our customers online.

- The publisher was able to leverage their deep understanding of the medical landscape, their highly knowledgeable and capable team, and rigorous performancetracking measures for their activities to offer unique and high-impact content solutions to the sponsor

CONCLUSION

As evidenced by the above case study, offerings from publishers like Wiley can allow pharmaceutical companies to reach their target HCP audiences across a spectrum of specialties (e.g., physicians, nurses, veterinarians, dentists, and pharmacists). They can support the needs of customers in ways that save time; appeal to various routes of data consumption; and, most importantly, ensure that key medical information reaches HCPs to assist them in their clinical decision making.

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