

ROUNDTABLE:

Sharpen communication strategies at speed: Can we unlock the new insights from 'alternative metrics'?

Digital Science

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DISCUSSION SUMMARY:

In today's data-driven landscape, the whole pharmaceutical and biotech industry grapples with managing and leveraging the vast amounts of internal data they generate and accumulate, and the field of medical affairs is no exception.

This data is crucial for advancing scientific research, accelerating new therapies development, and improving patient care. However, managing, harmonizing, and structuring these vast data sets, as well as gaining meaningful insights from them, presents significant challenges.

Despite the abundance of indicators and metrics available in scientific and medical communication, there remains a lack of knowledge in how to standardize the approach for scientific communication and publication assessment. Furthermore, how to effectively implement these indicators and metrics, whether for upcoming publications evaluation or establishing best practices.

In May 2024, Digital Science held a roundtable discussion with Medical Affairs leaders in Madrid on the topic of scientific communications strategies assessment and their success measurements for multiple stakeholders.

The group discussed the current strategies and challenges in measuring impact and identifying right metrics for different stakeholders, and how the Medical Affairs function could support proper stakeholder management, engagement and lead in establishing and implementing best practices.

KEY TOPICS:

Navigating the metrics maze

There are various indicators and metrics that are invaluable tools for assessing the impact and reach of scientific publications. However, it was identified at the roundtable that one of the primary issues is the sheer variety of indicators and metrics available and the absence of a clear framework to apply them practically. Another issue brought up was that not all indicators and metrics would hold equal weight or value when measuring impact. This raises critical questions about measurability, such as, how should these measurements be standardized across different contexts?

The rise of social media and Alternative Metrics

Healthcare professionals (HCPs) and patients are increasingly turning to social media to consume content. Therefore, understanding social media indicators is becoming increasingly important, as these platforms represent new channels for disseminating scientific information. While controlling the reach of content on social media is challenging, choosing the right channel strategically can maximize impact. Also, understanding the personas discussing the publications, and the context of their mentions (sentiment) are critical components of understanding social media attention and impact.

Yet, the Medical Affairs community still often struggles on how to define publications success across social media and incorporate it into the publication and communication planning. Therefore, there is a pressing need to better assess and understand social media metrics as they become vital channels for sharing scientific information.

Benchmarking and classification

One of the most significant gaps in the current landscape is the lack of clear benchmarks and thresholds to define what constitutes success for different types of publications across various therapeutic areas. There is a pressing need to classify publications not just by therapeutic area but also by other relevant categories, ideally to allow for a like to like comparison moving forward.

Communication planning beyond the scientific article

What are known as publication extenders', such as digital abstracts, blog and podcast summaries, plain language summaries, contribute significantly to the overall attention and impact of the original manuscript. **However, tracking these extenders and linking their attention back to the primary publication, as well as measuring the impact of such communication activity itself, remains a complex task.**

Harmonizing approaches for multiple stakeholders

Medical affairs teams face the challenge of harmonizing approaches to cater to multiple stakeholders, each with unique needs and perspectives. This involves not only understanding what can be measured and how but also educating stakeholders about these possibilities. Effective communication and education are essential to ensure stakeholders understand the metrics and their implications. There is no single metric that fits all purposes, making it crucial for medical affairs teams to define the specific needs of their stakeholders and see the bigger picture.

Creating digestible reports

In today's age of information overload, any reporting needs to focus on the 'so what?' to understand and act on the insight. Therefore, all metrics need to be processed into reports that are easy for different stakeholders to digest. This requires a careful balance of detail and clarity, ensuring that the information is both comprehensive and accessible.

Conclusion

The journey to effectively managing, harmonizing, and leveraging metrics in medical publications is ongoing. With the landscape continually evolving, especially with the rise of social media and alternative metrics, medical affairs teams must stay agile and informed. **The definition of impact and success should be driven by the objectives of the individual publication or publication plan, as well as taking different stakeholder interests into account, and it is important to define what success and impact looks like at the planning stage.** By defining clear benchmarks, understanding the unique needs of stakeholders, and ensuring effective communication, they can navigate the complexities of this landscape and drive meaningful impact in the dissemination of scientific information.

Digital Science would like to thank all roundtable participants for their contributions:

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