

Outsourced Field Medical Teams: A Real-World Debate

A Medical Affairs Professional Society (MAPS) Virtual Roundtable Hosted by Amplity on May 1, 2025

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Amplity recently sat down with 5 medical affairs leaders to explore the pros and cons of outsourcing field medical teams. Although outsourcing is well established for commercial teams in pharma, field medical outsourcing is not yet widely understood or practiced.

Why It Matters: Medical affairs is evolving into a more strategic and influential function. Leaders are expected to help shape product strategies, assess and integrate AI into workflows, and engage with regulators. These responsibilities come alongside the traditional jobs of congress planning, data generation, key opinion leader (KOL) mapping, and medical communication.

Given these pressures, delegating team construction and management to a trusted partner could unlock time and energy. That would help medical affairs step into the role of critical strategic partner.

Growth of Outsourcing Predicted: Life science organizations that outsource field medical teams—medical science liaisons (MSLs), lab science liaisons (LSLs), and precision medicine liaisons (PMLs) – commonly applaud this model for its ability to increase agility, speed, and control while de-risking certain aspects of an expanded field presence.

Perhaps that's why the medical affairs outsourcing market is poised to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 14.2% from 2024 to 2030.¹

At our recent roundtable, medical affairs leaders shared their honest opinions about the pros and cons of outsourcing field medical teams.

¹US Medical Affairs Outsourcing Market Size, Share & Trends Analysis...". Accessed May 2, 2025.
<https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/us-medical-affairs-outsourcing-market-report>

Factors Influencing the Decision to Outsource Medical Teams

At the start, the group cataloged the factors that influence the in-house or outsource decision.

1. Cost efficiency and the need to keep internal headcount low
2. Speed to market in the context of faster launches and global launches
3. Access to specialized, high-quality talent and expertise
4. Desire to retain talent
5. Desire for mission alignment
6. Intellectual property concerns

Cost-Efficiency of Contract MSLs : MSLs salaries range from \$155,000 for people with a PhD or PharmD degree and no experience, to a high of \$240,000 per year for those with industry experience. Salaries can be even higher in oncology and ultra- rare disease. Recruiting agencies charge 25% of the base salary—or more—to place a candidate.

Large pharma companies have talent acquisition departments, while smaller companies often work with agencies. But even large companies use placement agencies when internal teams hit a dead end.

For these reasons, the discussion group agreed that when salary, benefits, HR, compliance, training, technology costs, and speed of hiring are considered, contract MSLs are less expensive than in-house hires. “That makes (MSL outsourcing) very cost-efficient,” said one participant.

Scalability and Adaptability of Outsourced Teams: Pharma research and development pipelines are crowded, with the number of compounds in development doubling over the past decade, according to McKinsey. At the same time, accelerated timelines and rising competition have shortened the time in which a product can reach maximum sales.

“Outsourcing lets a company set up or take down a team rapidly,” says Denise Chambley, Amplity’s President of Medical. “If a product doesn’t meet its milestone or has completed its run, the client company is under no obligation to retain the team.”

Access to Specialized Expertise: As companies develop drugs and treatments for highly targeted, ever smaller groups of patients, they are looking for MSLs with previous, specialized experience. Bringing on outsourced talent is one way to quickly get expertise without building it in-house.



Factors Influencing the Decision to Outsource Medical Teams

(Continued)

Retention of Medical Science Liaisons: Retention is an issue across the industry, and some participants voiced concern that outsourced MSLs would be even less likely to stay with their employer. ARX Research found that the average MSL turnover rate is 35% per year, with MSLs generally leaving for larger companies and more money.²

"The cost and investment to train and bring an MSL up to speed is high. The chance of losing that person and then having to start over—for a small company, that's a big cost consideration," said one participant.

Interestingly, the turnover rate for Amplity contract MSLs is 10%, with 90% staying after 1 year. This is likely because Amplity pays at the market rate or slightly higher, giving our contract MSLs no reason to leave.

Mission Alignment and Team Integration: MSLs' cultural fit and dedication to the company mission is essential, whether they are under contract or a full-time hire. Some participants were hesitant about outsourcing for fear of bringing on board a candidate who did not align culturally.

"We really spend a lot of time when we select employees to see if there's a cultural fit," said one participant. "In rare disease, I think that's really important."

Cultural fit is an essential component to finding a happy employee. Amplity's team spends a significant amount of time implementing programs to align on values and work style when presenting candidates. We get to know the client and their mission. Based on our years of experience, we have a good sense of the type of person who would fit.

Intellectual Property Concerns: When using an external team, there can be fear of losing control over a company's intellectual property.

"When you're talking about a person who's not your own [full-time employee], the biggest challenge is, how much can I share with this person so far as my strategies are concerned," said one participant. "Because, at the end of the day, it's not my employee, and we are working in a very competitive space."

Contract MSLs are fully dedicated to a singular client and operate with strict internal firewalls to prevent any sharing of proprietary information from being shared. What's more, pharma partners always retain the right to hire Amplity contract MSLs internally, and we consider that a sign of a successful engagement.

²"Top Reasons for MSL Turnover," ARX Research. Accessed May 2, 2025.
[Top Reasons for MSL Turnover - Arx Research](#)

Use Cases for Outsourcing Field Medical Teams



Amplity's clients have made outsourced teams a critical part of their strategy in the following business scenarios:

Specialized Expertise for New Launches or New Indications: When a client's existing team is focused on a certain therapeutic area or compound, outsourced teams lay the groundwork for a new launch. The outsourced team integrates with the client's existing MSL team over time, ensuring knowledge transfer while allowing the internal team to focus on core objectives.

Transition Support for Established Products: When clients shift internal MSLs to focus on new priorities. They continue to need coverage for older, established products. Outsourced teams maintain coverage, ensuring continuity while the internal team transitions to its next focus area.

New Roles to Work Alongside Traditional MSLs: With the growth of specialty pharmaceuticals and precision medicine, a medical affairs strategy may involve new forms of outreach. For example, in oncology, outsourced teams of Laboratory Science Liaisons or Precision Medicine Liaisons help HCPs and lab professionals understand new diagnostic tests. These roles require specialized KPIs and training.

Community Practitioner Engagement: Traditional MSLs focus on guideline leaders and KOLs. Outsourced teams can focus on community HCPs. Empowered with data on community networks, these teams complement thought leader engagement, creating a more comprehensive approach that delivers value across the medical landscape.

Establishing Global Footprints: As clinical research becomes more global, establishing relationships with primary investigators and sites is necessary for trial success. Organizations need to have boots on the ground to maintain consistent face-to-face interactions with these sites. Contract MSLs are an efficient approach to quickly find talented individuals across the globe. Amplity understands local hiring laws and cultural needs to efficiently optimize global teams.

The Future of Medical Affairs and the Role of Outsourced Field Medical Teams

The future of medical affairs is exciting, with leaders poised to take on a greater strategic role within pharma companies.

Given that the number of drug launches in the United States is expected to be higher than in past decades³, the roundtable helped participants explore outsourcing as a strategic option.

In favor of using outsourced MSLs, participants agreed that the cost efficiencies and speed offered by this model were superior to hiring internally. Their biggest concerns were about outsourced MSLs' allegiances, retention, and quality.

Overall, they seemed open to the idea of outsourcing in light of market trends placing an increased focus on niche therapeutic areas; the rapid growth of novel compounds; and the need to establish scientific platforms quickly.

Indeed, we expect these pressures on medical leadership will likely make the outsourced MSL model more common. It's up to each organization to understand how the general concept can best be tailored to their own company's environment and specific portfolio needs.

³The FDA publishes annual reports on drug approvals, which show an upward trend in new molecular entity (NME) approvals over the past decade. These reports indicate that the number of NMEs approved annually has increased steadily, suggesting higher launch activity in the future. Example: FDA CDER 2022 Report (Advancing Health Through Innovation)

To discover how outsourced field medical can help you:

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Read about our work:

MSLs Change Prescriber Behavior

<https://amplity.com/case-study/msls-change-prescriber-behavior>

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