

Guest Article

Turning Science into Sales

Tips for Communicating Clinical Trial Results

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PMN78-05



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This article is part of the October 2008 issue of *Pharma Marketing News*.

For other articles in this issue, see:

<http://www.news.pharma-mkting.com/PMNIssueOct08archive.htm>

Published by:

VirSci Corporation

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Newtown, PA 18940

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Healthcare marketers are rewarded for increasing product revenue. However, product managers often miss a golden opportunity to drive product sales: they neglect to communicate clinical trial results properly and consequently fail to capitalize on completed medical research.

This article highlights how to effectively communicate scientific evidence in order to realize the full medical and commercial value of your brand and to maximize sales.

Transparency

Recent well-publicized incidents involving pharmaceutical companies trying to hide unfavorable trial results (see, for example, "The Vytorin Question"; <http://tinyurl.com/3ttz6g>) have ultimately wiped out billions of dollars in shareholder value and damaged the companies' reputation and credibility—their greatest assets.

Emerging standards call for full transparency and accountability, which require that complete trial results be made available to the public and physicians without bias or selectivity in reporting. Of course, communications must adhere to relevant company, industry and national codes of practice.

TIP #1: Convey Your Message Comprehensively

Cover the complete spectrum of tools to convey your message effectively: Choose the appropriate combination of words, style, layout, diagrams and images. Blend these various elements so that they enhance and reinforce each other. Demand that your communication agency align all of these components to ensure consistency in communicating your message.

TIP #2: Establish Your Clinical Trial Vocabulary

Ideally, trial and brand vocabulary are aligned. Focus on a list of approximately ten or fifteen powerful words that best describe the trial results. Each trial will require its own list. The following is a list successfully used in an actual trial:

Ten essential words for communicating trial results...

1. efficacious
2. convenient
3. solution
4. very good
5. improves
6. clinical outcome
7. saves time
8. faster

9. advantage
10. physiological

It is important to ensure consistent terminology in all your promotional activities, including the detail aids used by your sales force and the press releases issued by your public relations department. The appropriate set of words should be approved by your regulatory affairs and legal departments. A frequent challenge is to find internal agreement on the exact selection of words.

TIP #3: Emphasize the Uniqueness of Your Trial

Although it may not be immediately obvious, many studies are special or distinct. There are ways of looking at a trial that can help you identify its unique aspects and justify using the word "first," a powerful claim that attracts attention.

For example, look carefully at design, number of patients and other characteristics of your trial to see if it meets any of the following criteria for "first:"

- It may be the first randomized study, while your competitor's trials are case-control studies.
- Or it may be the first randomized double-blind study, while others were open-label.
- Maybe it's the first randomized double-blind study using an active control, and the others were placebo-controlled.

Ask the right questions to arouse curiosity about your trial!

TIP #4: Develop an Inner Logic in Your Documents

Write your marketing copy so that it create tension and stimulate the reader to continue reading. Here are 3 proven methods that work with physicians:

Question and Answer Format

Ask a question and then give the answer. Devise your questions in a way that allows you to offer the answers you want the readers to take away with them.

Example: *What's the optimal blood pressure? Our study revealed that ...*

Problem and Solution Format

Describe a medical problem and then explain the solution your product provides.

Example: *Hypertension-induced cardiovascular morbidity is a healthcare concern. The study shows that physicians can effectively control hypertension and reduce cardiovascular morbidity using ...*

Continues...

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Past and Present Format

Emphasize how the standard of therapy has improved over time and the role your product plays in that improvement.

Example: *Until recently there was no effective treatment for bone metastases. With the advent of biphosphonates, cancer patients can now benefit from ...*

TIP #5: Find Alternatives to the word "prove"

Since most study conclusions are based on statistical significance and contain a certain margin of error, they are not proven in a mathematical or logical sense. Therefore it is best to avoid the term and use alternatives such as:

- Validate
- Document
- Confirm
- Highlight
- Emphasize
- Underline

TIP #6: Clarify "Difference"

The term "difference," without a modifier will leave your listener or reader ignorant of whether the change is for the better or the worse. Even "increase" and "decrease" do not make it clear whether the effect is beneficial or detrimental. However, the word "improvement" makes it clear that the outcome is favorable, immediately indicating that the drug effect is beneficial.

TIP #7: Use Headlines to Attract the Reader

Always use headlines for your marketing copy that promise to add value, announce a benefit, or demonstrate an advantage. Avoid neutral or purely descriptive headlines, for example: "Randomized clinical trial analysis completed," which leaves the reader ignorant of the outcome. Instead try an eye-catching headline: "Patient benefit validated in a randomized clinical trial".

TIP #8: Utilize Explanatory Subheadings

Consider inserting a purposeful subheading. Use subheadings to guide the reader, pique curiosity and sum up important information.

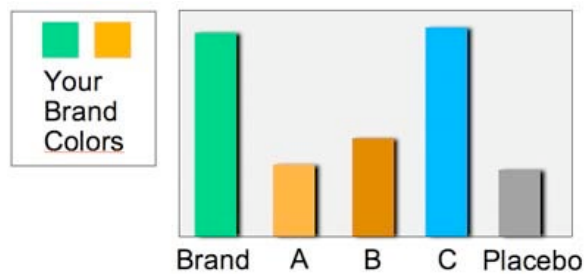
Less informative:	More informative:
Antihypertensive Efficacy	Antihypertensive Efficacy Mean Blood Pressure Values

TIP #9: Make Use of Bullets

A continuous block of text attracts fewer readers than a well designed list with bullet points. Use bullet points to express the key messages you wish to convey.

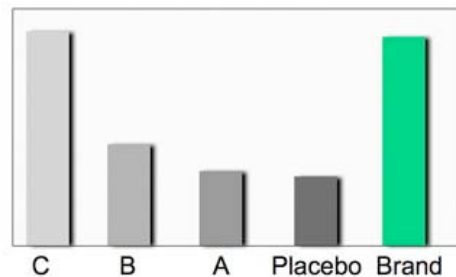
TIP #10: Show Your Brand Color

Strengthen brand awareness: For example, use your brand color for the column depicting your product in a bar chart comparing it to other brands. If it is green, the brand column should be green. Don't let your agency make the mistake of creatively choosing a different color. Your reader should immediately recognize which data belong to your product.



- Placebo has best placement
- Competitor C placed very advantageously
- Competitor A shown with Brand color

Figure 1A (above)



- Brand now placed to highlight differences
- Competitors now shown in neutral colors

Figure 1B (above)

TIP #11: Beware of Design Pitfalls

The agency presenting the initial diagram (Figure 1A) committed three mistakes:

- (1) The placebo column is placed on the right hand side—the most advantageous position;
- (2) competitor A is depicted using pumpkin, one of your two brand colors;

Continues...

- (3) the superior results of one of the competitors appear even more prominent because they are placed between much smaller columns.

By adjusting colors and positions you can make the difference between your brand and the other products much clearer (See Figure 1B).

Pharma Marketing News

Dr Günter Umbach is author of the book "Successfully Marketing Clinical Trial Results: Winning in the Healthcare Business," which illustrates how to turn science into sales

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