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Higher Goal for Phase 3 Trials: Answer the How To's and What If's

By Steve Butts

Except for those now rare instances where a new medical product is the only way to diagnose or treat a disease, nearly all marketers in our industry are launching products with only incremental advantages over established products and brands. That means that the single most important thing they have to do is to convince physicians, payors and patients of the value of even considering the benefits of switching from current products.

While marketing messages must be tailored to each target audience, physicians are the gatekeepers. They must be convinced first, and it is impossible to market successfully to physicians unless you know how they think *before* starting Phase 3 clinical trials. Armed with that knowledge, you can help the clinical operations team and researchers design trials that down the road will pave the way to marketing to physicians.

Physicians understand that drugs are not perfect. They also tend to accept challenges such as nuisance side effects or titration schedules, if they are prepared for them. Unfortunately, marketers tend to get very excited about points of product differentiation and forget about the potential hurdles that could trip them up in persuading physicians to switch to their product. Identifying the issues up-front, and designing clinical trials to address those issues, will prepare you to proactively offer solutions to your customers.

Ask yourself, "What are the possible questions the average prescribing physician will have about my product as they consider where, when and how to use it?" To get you started, here are a few potential questions: How do I switch a patient from Product X to my product without having the patient's symptoms fully resurface? What side effects emerge first? What are some early indicators that the product is working or not working? Make sure your clinical plan addresses the basic "how tos" and "what ifs" of using your product, no matter how pedestrian the research may

seem. While the product differentiators may lead you down the road to success, nothing can slow a launch like stumbling on the basics.

If you would like to share your experience in these issues, or discuss how you can ensure a successful product launch, send an email to rkeefe@tcgbiopharma.com.

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