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Reprint

e-Marketing at the Point of Care

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Pharmaceutical marketing strategies are evolving more rapidly than any other time in history. The traditional detail-based marketing model is being challenged by physicians' ever-growing time pressures and lack of time for sales reps. Additionally, more and more physicians are online seeking medical information and their adoption of point-of-care decision support tools like electronic prescribing, is definitely on the upswing.

Given these challenges, most pharmaceutical companies are committing some level of marketing resources to e-promotion, including e-detailing and e-CME initiatives. Even more potent technologies like point-of-care electronic prescribing (e-prescribing) and related integrated drug reference tools are on the verge of becoming the most powerful marketing tools, since these technologies allow marketers to reach physicians when it matters most: when they are making the prescribing decision.

Momentum behind e-prescribing adoption is accelerating, through the successes of vendors like Allscripts Healthcare Solutions (www.allscripts.com, Libertyville, IL) with its TouchWorks Rx+ system now used by more than 3,000 physicians and ScriptRx, Inc (www.scriptrx.com, West Palm Beach, FL) with their hospital emergency department CPOE systems used by more than 2,500 ER physicians and other personnel.

Why e-Prescribing?

Every healthcare stakeholder receives benefits from e-prescribing. Patients can gain more time with their physicians, greater convenience in the prescription process, and, most importantly, improved medication safety.

For pharmacies, the Institute of Safe Medical Practices estimates that pharmacies make about 150 million telephone calls yearly to physicians to clarify written prescriptions. With the adoption of e-prescribing, productivity cost savings would be dramatic. And, the accuracy of e-prescribing also reduces prescription errors and liability. Payers benefit from improved formulary and treatment protocol compliance.

But it is physicians who have the most to gain from e-prescribing. New e-prescribing applications can reduce medication errors, improve patient satisfaction, and reduce practice costs. According to the 2003 Boston Consulting Group study, 77% of physicians reported that e-prescribing has had an impact on delivering better patient care and 74% say that patient satisfaction is up as well. In that same BCG study, e-prescribing adoption is expected to more than double by 2005 from current levels of 11-15%.

The momentum suggests that pharmaceutical marketers must be prepared to capitalize on this significant new marketing opportunity.

Who Is Using Point-of-Care Tools?

According to research conducted by IMS Health, physicians who have tried e-prescribing find the benefits compelling. Integrated reference information enables immediate access to immense pharmaceutical and therapeutic information to aid patient care. The most dramatic finding of the IMS research is the rapid adoption by the highest volume prescribers. There was a 380 % increase in e-prescribers in the top three deciles compared to the total physician population. These high-decile prescribers are the most sought after by pharmaceutical companies. This adoption is important for pharmaceutical companies to recognize because e-prescribing systems have potential for a significant impact on physician clinical decisions compared to paper-based prescribing.

Studies show that with immediate access to major formulary guidelines, formulary compliance among e-prescribers rises to over 95 % and generic utilization increases to as high as 55-60 % of total prescriptions. The primary benefit of point-of-care tools is the positive effect on patient outcomes, including greater safety and higher satisfaction with medication. Of course, the ability to reach physicians at the "moment of truth," thereby influencing prescribing decisions is another key benefit. There is no better time to communicate with the prescriber than at the medication decision time.

Point-of-care access is particularly critical for the ever-increasing number of high prescribing, "no see" office-based physicians.

The potential marketing implications are dramatic. An estimated 75 % of the top 30 pharmaceutical companies have engaged in some form of point-of-care promotion testing and investigation. Promotional programs undertaken by pharmaceutical companies, thus far, have shown dramatic and very exciting positive performance in driving new prescription activity.

Expectations are that pharmaceutical companies promoting their brands via the e-Prescribing tools can realize an average of 3-9% share growth in market share, as evidenced through recent similar programs conducted by IMS and Allscripts, via the Allscripts TouchWorks Rx+ application. And, e-promotional programs run by IMS and ScriptRx, via the ScriptRx emergency department CPOE systems, are averaging 50-75% growth in new Rx's over a 6-9 month period.

Point-of-Care Marketing Strategies:

1. Drive Physician Brand Awareness: Therapeutic options can be proposed and physicians can be referred to specific integrated reference information at the point of care. Physicians can be educated on how to correctly prescribe a particular drug - indications, benefits, efficacy, dosing and recommended refills, for example. Messages can be updated when the point-of-care device is logged on to reflect new information about a drug. Or, clinical alerts can provide information designed to raise physician awareness of the latest compliance and clinical trial information, label changes, new indications, interactions, etc. (See Graphic #1 and Graphic #2).

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Graphic #1 - Allscripts – Clinical promotion - sample



Graphic #2
ScriptRx – Hospital ER Clinical Promotion – sample screen

2. Drive Consumer Brand Awareness: Patients can be provided educational or compliance-oriented materials, printed either on their prescription forms or on separate documents or “discharge instructions. Based on the patient’s diagnosis or prescription, he can receive appropriate educational materials in the office, or can be referred to on-line educational or compliance programs. For example, a message for a hypertensive patient could be: “For more information about controlling your blood pressure, please visit www.hypertension.com.”

3. **Improve Access to Physicians:** Combining physician prescribing practices and detailing access data can be used to target physicians with high potential. Physicians can be invited to e-detailing sessions, request detail rep visits or enter online to receive samples. To aid in clinical trial recruitment, physicians can receive prompts for patients who are potentially eligible for trials.
4. **Administer Risk Management Programs:** The point-of-care system has the capability to store drug histories, flag potential drug interactions and allergic reactions. The system also allows pharmacists to conduct drug utilization reviews (DUR). Clinical messages can quickly alert physicians to drug warnings if issues arise. Finally, the system can prompt physicians with test recommendations when appropriate.
5. **Improve Access to and Timeliness of Market Data:** Daily or weekly point-of-care data can offer rapid market reads. For example, marketers can track new drugs, new forms or new indications by diagnosis, formulary changes, competitive actions, off-label usage, effects of new studies and marketing programs or other promotional events. In addition, these systems enable point-of-care interactivity that allows physicians to be queried with e-surveys, adding insight into physician therapeutic decisions.

Summary

The challenges faced by pharmaceutical marketing, including the continuing difficulty and expense in driving pharmaceutical business through the traditional detailing model, suggests the need for new marketing tools to be competitive in the future. With the growing use of all "e-tools" by physicians and consumers, pharmaceutical companies are encouraged to seek ways to take advantage of the electronic access to their customers.

The diversity of techniques available through systems like those offered through IMS and its alliances with Allscripts and ScriptRx could greatly enhance reach, frequency and consistency of marketing messages unlike any other pharmaceutical marketing tool. No other marketing medium can have such an influence on physicians at the ultimate place and time - at the point-of-care!

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