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DRUG MARKETERS NEED MORE THAN DEMOGRAPHIC DATA TO EFFECTIVELY MARKET TO CONSUMERS, ANALYST SUGGESTS

By Business Writer June Wilhite

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Pharmaceutical firms should use not only demographic data but technological and health dimension data as well when developing direct-to-consumer marketing tools, suggested Michael J. Barrett, senior analyst at the marketing research firm Forrester Research Inc.

At Cambridge, Mass.-based Forrester Research, Barrett and colleagues survey thousands of Americans twice a year about technology attitudes and behavior and how these factors impact certain sectors.

With specific regard to the health care sector, Forrester Research has polled consumers to determine how these attitudes differ according to disease state. This additional technographic, attitudinal and psychographic data can help pharmaceutical companies to craft effective DTC marketing tools.

Among other features identified by Forrester Research were patients' ages and household incomes. Although this demographic information is useful to pharmaceutical firms when they are marketing directly to consumers, Barrett claims they need additional data.

"Our message is that demographics are not enough," Barrett told FWI. "What you would like to know, as you set out to market to a particular disease state is whether there are attitudes toward the health care system that could influence [marketing] channel or message," Barrett said. "And you'd also like to know, with respect to health care, what online behaviors might be like."

In one survey, Forrester Research compared allergy and stomach ulcer patients and found that the patients initially looked similar. The average age of allergy patients was 48.5 years, while that of patients with stomach ulcers was 49.3 years. However, there was a huge disparity in household income between the two groups: \$53,071 for allergy patients versus \$39,558 for stomach ulcer patients. "Demographics, at first blush, would lead you to believe that these populations might be similar, until you [investigate] a little more," Barrett said.

Other data obtained from the survey revealed that heart disease patients and cancer patients also differ. Patients with heart disease tend to be more conservative and are more often retired than cancer patients. In addition, Barrett said he further investigated this population with regard to their technological habits. At first, his analysis suggested that heart disease patients were less comfortable with technology. Further investigation revealed that once these two groups of patients were actually online, those with heart disease were more online savvy than cancer patients.

"So, whenever one considers the openness of your target market toward technology, a qualifying question is once a consumer is online, do the differences hold? We found that they don't," Barrett explained.

The health factors of these two disease groups also suggested differences according to disease state. Barrett said in the case of cancer patients, drug firms are dealing with a very highly motivated population, which has to factor in their choice of marketing messages

and channels. Meanwhile, the heart disease patients are going to be "relatively speaking, more passive, both online and in general interaction with physicians."

"The implication here is that the heart disease sufferer is still a target audience that [pharmaceutical marketers have] to motivate toward self-help, whereas in the case of cancer sufferers, you're already tapping an intensity that is already there. [This fact] fundamentally would change the way you would approach these two groups," Barrett said.

Barrett continued that Forrester Research has made similar discoveries in other analyses. Each analysis showed that if Forrester Research had only collected demographics,

critical patient information could have been missed, Barrett argued.

For example, in an analysis with high-cholesterol patients, the firm inquired about technology and health care attitudes. As a result, Forrester Research learned that high-cholesterol patients were open to cross-channel campaigns despite what their demographics indicated. Also, with diabetes patients, the company found that these individuals were more dependent on their physicians for medical information than other disease groups. To reiterate his message, Barrett concluded, "Demographics aren't enough. [T]echnology and health dimensions really count in terms of understanding an audience."

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John MackVirSci Corporation (www.virsci.com)

PO Box 760, Newtown, PA 18940

215-504-4164, 215-504-5739 FAX

<mailto:johnmack@virsci.com>