

STUDY OF THE ORGANISATION OF WORK OF MEDICAL (PHARMACEUTICAL) REPRESENTATIVES

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One of the most important tasks of pharmaceutical marketing is to create demand and stimulate sales of drugs in order to increase their sales volume, and improve efficiency and overall profitability of the company. Nowadays, pharmaceutical companies all over the world, including in Iraq, actively use the work of medical (pharmaceutical) representatives. Researches in directions of improvement and evaluation the activity of medical (pharmaceutical) representatives are extremely important today.

The importance of medical representatives for pharmaceutical companies is confirmed with the fact that the industry spends 46-63% of their promotion budgets on medical representatives. The use of medical representatives of pharmaceutical companies is one of the most extensively used and expensive promotional tools. Large pharmaceutical companies spend about 8-13 thousand USD per one doctor per year. But this high investment is easily recouped as medical representatives provide their companies significant revenue. According to a study of twenty multinational pharmaceutical companies, each medical representative provides sales of drugs at \$ 300-900 thousand USD per year.

A medical (pharmaceutical) representative can be defined as a pharmaceutical companies employee relating with promotion of drugs to the pharmaceutical market. Today, there are such job positions as a medical representative promoting prescription drugs; a medical representative for promotion of OTC drugs; a medical representative with the functions of a sales representative. Contact between a medical representative and a healthcare practitioner is viewed as a vital part of marketing strategy of pharmaceutical company.

The functional responsibilities of a medical representative usually include forming awareness about a drug and a company among healthcare professionals (doctors as general practitioners and narrow specialists, pharmacists, wholesalers, etc.). Working with doctors, they carry out individual visits to the clients, conduct presentations of drugs and round table discussions, and participate in conferences, workshops, exhibitions and control over prescription drugs by doctors. Working with pharmacist, medical representatives control drug sales volume and provide and support merchandising at the pharmacies.

A successful medical representative has a high sales rate, dominates in some business region and maintains clients. The tasks of medical representatives include regularly visits to physicians to provide information about new medicines of the company, reminders about the known medicines, discussion the drug use in treatment regimens, positioning of medicines, emphasizing of the benefits of medicines, encouraging doctors to prescribe the drug and pharmacists to recommend it to customers, analyzing the competitors activity, and creation and support the company's image. As a rule, medical representatives work with specific drug or ATC-groups in the certain territory or with the certain group of clients (pharmaceutical wholesale and retail companies, hospitals and clinics, and certain categories of patients).

Activities of medical representatives are checked by regional managers and product managers. They plan the activities of medical representatives, carry out and participate in the process of their training, in double visits, analyze weekly reports. The control indicators of medical representatives are as follows: the volume and dynamics of selling products, control of movement throughout the area, work planning, control of distribution of time between major and minor clients, the number of visits per month to customers of the appropriate category, control of promotional materials expenditures, the use of corporate finance, machinery, equipment, the time to provide information on request of the head, development of skills of medical representatives.

Key requirements for medical representatives include compliance with of social and psychological characteristics, and operational and intellectual skills. Usually they should have pharmaceutical or medical education, work experience, and driving license. Communication and presentation skills are very important selection criteria for a medical representative job position. Pharmaceutical companies try to improve the skill level of medical representatives constantly organizing trainings on the firm's products, conducting effective presentations, planning of work, mastery of delicate negotiations, the work with the objections, etc.

It was found, that only in eight cases out of every 100 medical representative visits to clinics or hospitals in USA, a medical representative actually speak with a physician. Another study found that only 7% of medical representative visits last longer than two minutes; half of medical representative calls last less than two minutes. At least 35% of physicians do not want to deal with medical representatives at all. In recent years, 11% of doctors had severely restricted or completely barred pharmaceutical representative access, with an additional 34% imposing some access restrictions. It is happening in European countries such as Switzerland, Russia and Italy with changes pending in France. The most successful pharmaceutical companies (Novartis, Roche and AstraZeneka) reduce the number of employees in the field force (on 65%, 33% and 24% respectively).

Despite the fact that traditional detailing has become less influential on physicians from the pharmaceutical industry prospective, the literature shows that physicians' contact with medical representatives still has a considerable influence on their prescribing behaviors. Experts attribute the increase in efficiency of medical representatives with the use of modern information technology capabilities, such as multi-channel marketing.