

# **THE POSSIBILITIES OF USING INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WORK OF MEDICAL REPRESENTATIVES**

S. V. Zhadko (Ukraine), A. Mostafa (Lebanon)

*National University of Pharmacy*

[alihmostafa@yahoo.com](mailto:alihmostafa@yahoo.com)

In the domain of healthcare with increasing population and low medical insurance schedules of fees, doctors tend to meet more patients and by this way decreasing the chances of meeting medical representatives (MRs).

MRs are usually the mediators between physicians and pharmaceutical companies. For a long time, MRs were and still marketing their companies' pharmaceutical products by face-to-face detailing, which is still the most used sales method in such domain. The problem MRs face with physicians is the long time they have to wait in order to meet them, and even when they are able to, they are given a short period of time, leading to restrictive conditions and effects on marketing.

To be more specific, face-to-face detailing is facing an issue due to several reasons, mainly increased expenses for MRs, difficulty of interactions between doctors and MRs, and time constraints of physicians. Nowadays, pharmaceutical companies face real and serious changes. Business is going digital and such companies must catch up.

And because the practical effectiveness doesn't meet the expectations, and in order to increase the chances of investments of pharmaceutical companies, they developed electronic detailing (e-detailing) using the help of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and involved such technology in the field of pharmaceutical marketing.

E-detailing describes the use of electronic media and devices that ease sales presentations to physicians. E-detailing is considered a new communication channel for such companies to promote medicines and products to physicians. This explains the technological progress in the ICT sector since the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century, where electronic devices such as laptops and tablets became a tool for E-detailing, decreasing the use of printed brochures and paper work, and enhancing the pharmaceutical companies to give a significant attention to such technology, which is now showing signs of proliferation.

Besides internet, MRs are using several digital technologies mainly video conferencing and automatic voice response, which permit the doctors to get latest

information and knowledge at lower costs than face-to-face detailing, hence increasing sales.

Medical system is rapidly changing in healthcare due to invention of digital technologies. The access is shrinking, the marketing is becoming multichannel, and MR-to-physician interaction is totally redefined. Once physicians turn to digital technology, as a favorite source of information, they allow challenges for MRs, resulting them to struggle more. This doesn't mean pharmaceutical companies should neglect physician engagement; after all they do the prescribing. MRs engage the physicians with mobile applications providing content that target the physicians' needs.

Enterprise pharmaceutical companies such as GlaxoSmithKline, Merck, Pfizer, and more, provide doctors with digital applications to facilitate accountability and standardization, support more effective CRM (Customer Relationship Management) and allow the MRs to be leaders and the pharmaceutical companies to be innovators.

E-detailing should give a priority to end-user's requirements and needs, over business need to make MRs' job easier and more productive. Moreover, compliance of such digital technology is a great factor that ensure content distribution, which increase opportunities for pharmaceutical companies, improve doctor engagement, maintain MRs role as a trusted information resource, reduce travel expenses, increase MR productivity and decrease print and fulfillment costs.

According to eMarketer report in 2016, US pharmaceutical and healthcare companies spent \$1.93 billion to promote their products by digital channels. However research has shown that this number will be around \$3.1 billion by the end of this decade, specialized for digital advertising.

Dynamics of sales are changing, but physicians and MRs, on both sides of the interaction, remain the ultimate driving force. And to overcome the limitations of face-to-face detailing in pharmaceutical marketing, and to maximize the strengths of E-detailing, it's essential that MRs understand this digital technology in order to fulfill their crucial role in such domain.

Thus, e-detailing supported by modern ICT provides valuable opportunities for pharmaceutical companies to increase the efficiency of promotion and MRs' activity.