



Emerging markets and the need for training

The opportunities for CROs and pharma companies in the emerging markets of China, India, the Middle East and Africa are vast and encompass all phases of clinical research. However, international training of clinical research personnel in the industry is urgently needed to cope with the increased demand for trials in these regions. **Dr Rabinder Buttar** discusses the need for training in the emerging markets of clinical research

In the past few years emerging markets have become key to the drug development industry. The number of clinical trials going on within emerging markets is increasing and now the challenge for the clinical research community is to implement solutions which are sustainable in the long-run.

Raising regulatory standards in emerging markets

A good understanding of local regulations is imperative when considering conducting trials in the emerging markets. Forging good relationships with local regulators is essential and in doing this the pharma company or CRO can keep abreast of changes in local requirements. Education and training of regulators, including Ethics Committees, in international guidelines and the wider aspects of clinical research is something that pharma companies and CROs can facilitate. In doing so, local relations are strengthened leading to expedited approval timelines and successful conduct of the trial.

As one of the first international CROs in India, nearly a decade ago, ClinTec found this approach highly effective. By forging good local relations, and being involved in training, ClinTec experienced overall shortening of regulatory timelines leading to faster approval of clinical trial applications, better adoption of ICH-GCP principles and an overall increase in the awareness of clinical research in the country. Whilst there is an ongoing training need in India to keep up with the growing demand for clinical research, ClinTec's approach in India, which addressed the requirement for training, is an approach which others could adopt.

Creating a global talent pool of clinical researchers

Training clinical researchers in the pharma and CRO industries, and within hospitals, is required to cope with the rising demand for clinical trials in the emerging markets. There is a need for more internationally accredited training courses and the development of academic institutions which are globally, as well as locally, recognised. These institutes would generate the next enterprising clinical researchers equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to work effectively on global projects at a local level.

Pharma and CROs working in these markets have created an opportunity for Western institutes to partner with their Eastern counterparts to deliver international clinical research training programmes in their home country. Newly created industry, academic, governmental partnerships could contribute to the development of a worldwide talent pool of internationally accredited researchers.

If training is not addressed in these markets, the consequences to the industry could be serious. Pharma companies planning to conduct quality large-scale trials efficiently could be hampered due to a lack of qualified local personnel.

Increasing an emerging region's ability to learn

When considering working in any region, sound local knowledge is essential and a learning culture most suited to the region can be created. It is important that trainers themselves have good knowledge of the local culture, regulations and specific learning needs in addition to international experience. Pharma and CRO industries are under pressure to deliver trials as quickly as possible, however this can be impacted by local approval timelines which are usually longer than those in the Western world. Global CROs and pharma companies need to be even more responsive, agile and flexible in delivering innovative training solutions locally. It is also imperative that training is adapted to include regulations specific for each country.

Middle East and Africa as a key hub for clinical research

As the focus of the pharma industry understandably shifts towards the largest emerging market, China, with its huge population and enormous scope for clinical research, the Middle East and Africa region should also be given more consideration. It has amongst the world's highest populations of diabetes, next to India, and the prevalence of other major diseases such as hypertension make it an attractive region for patient recruitment.

Furthermore, unique populations of patients such as those with Gaucher's disease and Hepatitis C can be found in relatively higher numbers in the Middle East than elsewhere. Following the global economic downturn, which also affected the Middle East's financial markets, investors have turned to new areas for investing and healthcare has moved higher on their agenda. As a result, new hospitals with modern infrastructure are under development across the Middle East, coupled with new training courses on offer for local personnel; consequently the amount of trials conducted in this region is expected to grow substantially.

With the rise of clinical research in the emerging markets, the establishment of many new training institutions in these regions should lead to the creation of a worldwide talent pool of clinical research personnel who are equipped to perform excellently and contribute to local, as well as global, clinical research. ■

ClinTec International opened its global Academy of Clinical Research Excellence in Dubai in May 2010.

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