Creating meaningful brand value propositions, delivered locally

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Overview: The reforms to the NHS in England place patient outcomes and experience as the drivers for optimising care. The implications for the pharmaceutical industry and brand communications should not be underestimated. To be successful in the new healthcare environment, pharmaceutical brands will have to offer a different and broader value proposition, addressing a much wider range of needs with stakeholder groups who are more interdependent than ever before. Data from randomised clinical trials is not the complete answer; data based on local surrogate markers in addition to hard endpoints will be critical for carving out a sustainable competitive position. Marketers need to reflect upon their approach and redefine the value of their communications by developing new strategies and thinking outside of the box.

Key words: patient outcomes, local surrogate markers, customer insight

Key points:

- In the new value-driven NHS, holistic patient outcomes will be the drivers of health and social care provision.
- These outcomes are not addressed entirely by clinical trials and will vary from area to area, depending on local health economy
- Local surrogate markers in addition to hard endpoints will be needed to identify the interventions that deliver value at local level.
- Engaging with CCGs and other emerging stakeholders to understand their drivers is the first step to creating a brand proposition that will address local needs and resonate with customers.

The new commissioning landscape

The Health and Social Care Bill became law in March 2012. From April 2013, NHS England will see substantial changes in the way that care is provided, with a renewed focus on cost and value to deliver the required £20billion in efficiency savings.

NICE guidance and Quality Standards are intended to reduce health inequalities across the country but need to be interpreted in the context of the local community and their needs.

The NHS Commissioning Board has been set up to hold Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to account and to ensure they deliver high quality patient care closer to home. NHS policies such as the NHS Outcomes Framework and the Quality, Innovation, Productivity and Prevention agenda (QIPP) are major drivers towards achieving these goals.

Against this background, Health and Wellbeing Boards (HWBs) have been established and will work with local authorities to assess the health needs of populations and to find solutions that improve health outcomes.

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CCGs are tasked with implementing national guidance at local level and also addressing the specific health needs of their population identified by HWBs. When planning patient pathways and commissioning services, CCGs will therefore examine the value proposition for healthcare interventions in line with national policies but with their own interpretation and their own policies. Proactive and forward-looking pharma companies have an unprecedented opportunity to participate in this process by working with CCGs and building value for their brand that goes way beyond the clinical data.

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Understanding priorities
A survey recently undertaken by Equip Communications showed that CCGs are focussed on:

- A holistic approach, driven by patient outcomes
- Health status and social functioning, driving decision making around patient care
- Long-term value focused on population needs of local economies, which will underpin prescribing protocols.

Holistic care addresses the full range of a patient's needs and should aim to deliver the best experience for patients and carers across primary, secondary and social care. When done well, a holistic approach will define the design of patient pathways and services.

Local markers to underpin commissioning
Evidence based prescribing is well established and randomised clinical trials, whilst necessary to ensure safety and efficacy, are not enough in this new and evolving landscape. Commissioners and other groups such as policy makers, GPs, and patients, are demanding further evidence that relates to their local population and local needs to guide decision-making around all aspects of patient services, including prescribing.

The starting point for establishing high quality patient services is therefore to understand the markers of improved outcomes in a holistic environment.

Local surrogate markers, generated outside of the clinical trial setting, can help to demonstrate the value of a medicine in everyday clinical practice. The necessary data can be generated from a
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A wide variety of sources, at CCG and local practice level. This evidence can be used to demonstrate the impact of care on patient outcomes and patient experience at local level.

**Pharma as a trusted advisor**

Really understanding your customers requires a consistent and long term approach that builds and maintains positive working relationships. Essential components of relationships based on trust include active listening, open and honest dialogue and congruent messaging.

An insight-led local market strategy is essential in building a compelling value proposition that resonates with customers and allows for effective local engagement.

Deep customer insight through enhanced consultation is the foundation of an effective value proposition

A competitive brand position needs to address the specific needs of the new and existing NHS stakeholders (including patients) who shape, influence and implement policy with well-designed congruent messages. Perceived value will be delivered only if the content truly increases understanding and makes a real difference to patient outcomes.

Thinking about stakeholders as individuals, with needs and beliefs that influence their decision making, is the first step to convincing them of the value of the brand. The next step is to develop a suite of messages that can be tailored around their individual needs. Such messages will allow customers to understand how the brand can add value in their patient population.

Helping patients to stay healthier and feel better will be welcomed and understood as adding value. A robust value proposition based around meeting patient needs can play a vital role in opening channels and defining the common language to help improve closer collaboration.

Conclusions

Pharmaceutical companies, working with the NHS, are a potential route to innovation and greater value within local health economies. Today’s healthcare environment demands more than safety and efficacy data. By focusing on outcomes rather than brands, pharma can contribute in the following ways:

- Improved patient outcomes
- Better patient experience
- Enabler of change
- Redesign of patient pathways
- Improve efficiency of the NHS system

It is time for pharma marketer’s to address their approach to communications in a very different way in order to add perceived value and be effective in the new world.

**RCTs are no longer the complete answer. Local surrogate markers will resonate with CCGs**
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Equip Communications helps you to transform your competitive position by delivering value-based solutions that address real customer needs. We use insight-led strategies to develop robust stakeholder programmes that deliver customer value at local level, and support local programme implementation using the specialist skills in our wider network.

For more information, please contact Equip Communications.

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