

Transforming the Clinical Experience As a Digital Care Option for Patients — A New Age of Care

A Conversation with MaryAnne Rizk, Ph.D.



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For MaryAnne Rizk, Ph.D., Senior VP, Digital R&D Strategy at IQVIA, improving the patient experience is more than a calling; it's a passion. She is driven by an inherent desire to improve the quality of life for patients. Her particular area of expertise is creating innovative technology solutions to forge the next steps in the industry's evolution toward the digital age of care. Her work delivers value by providing purpose-built solutions for trial sites and sponsors in both clinical and real-world settings to accelerate innovation and transform decision making. In addition to its market-leading CRO services, IQVIA also provides solutions that allow for data interoperability, establishing a common language among clinical, real world, compliance and commercial settings.

"At IQVIA, we are committed to helping improve patients' lives and patient safety," MaryAnne says. "We accomplish this goal by

transforming clinical development through our digital technologies, our data, and our services. Our focus is on making sure that we empower our customers to create more innovative, more precise, and faster clinical development solutions."

IQVIA ensures its SaaS-based technologies are intuitive, intelligent, and interoperable — and most of all, that they anticipate and meet the needs of the patient in order to elicit the kind of authentic responses that result in meaningful data.

"We are helping our customers improve the way patients engage in the clinical setting," MaryAnne says. "Our strategy is to design orchestrated clinical trials that dramatically improve the patient experience."

Across IQVIA's orchestrated clinical trial portfolio, the emphasis remains on the patient, helping them understand how to enroll in a study and assisting them in every step of the process.

"IQVIA's newly launched trial matching tool allows us to appropriately identify patients for upcoming clinical trials at local sites," MaryAnne explains. "This will make a huge difference in patient recruitment and enrollment. We are committed to transforming the experience so that patients look at clinical research as a care option."

As an example, IQVIA is helping life-science and pharma organizations give patients the opportunity to consent to an upcoming study or to get direct-to-patient shipping electronically.

"We've created a comprehensive and complementary set of products and services that allows pharma companies to be responsive to patients' needs," she explains. "An example might be arranging for a phlebotomist to come to a patient's home."

MaryAnne and her teams are thinking

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through all the ways that IQVIA can help customers facilitate the same digital experience for patients that they would get in a face-to-face clinical trial setting — from remote monitoring of data to capturing outcomes.

"We've taken a holistic approach to incrementally improving patients' experience of being part of a clinical study, and, just as important, to helping them remain part of the study as a clinical care option," she says.

Within its orchestrated clinical trials suite, IQVIA has more than 20 different applications as part of its strategy to digitize clinical research.

"We're here to transform trials, and as such, we recognized and anticipated the need to do more in virtual settings," MaryAnne says. "For example, we knew we already had the tools in place to improve trial design and planning and to recalculate models for recruitment, budget, and forecasting. Currently, we are launching our SaaS-based risk-based monitoring application in response to the need for more remote and centralized monitoring."

While patients are central to driving innovation at IQVIA, MaryAnne says she and her team are also focused on delivering in-

novative solutions to sponsors and sites, as they are the ones actually interacting with the patients.

"We are helping our sponsors improve how they identify risk, calculate impact, and execute assessments," she says. "We are also helping sponsors identify where patient visit services could be improved, for example, in-home health nursing. We want to enable them to create a seamless experience for patients so they feel connected."

Ultimately, IQVIA's perspective on digital innovation for clinical trials is grounded in value. With so many different opportunities to apply digital solutions, depending on where an organization is in its maturity or openness to innovation, being focused on value keeps a one-size-fits-all solution off the table.

"Creating digital solutions isn't about reducing headcount or decreasing our costs; it's all about driving more value," MaryAnne confirms. To do this well, IQVIA is looking to re-engineer clinical research. By automating processes and using artificial intelligence-based algorithms from its clinical data repository, they can suggest the next best action for a user. And its data volume is impressive: IQVIA has more than 100,000 software users and operates in 100-plus countries with more than 650 million non-identified patient records.

"Additionally, IQVIA tracks 85% of global pharma sales and has more than 300 patents and patents pending," MaryAnne says. "Because IQVIA is patient-centric, its offerings bridge the clinical, real-world, compliance, and commercial businesses, all in partnership with its pharma clients to help them make the right decisions every time."

"At the end of the day, it's about helping sponsors be able to measure risk and improve the value they can drive to continue clinical research with a degree of confidence and accuracy that is passed along to patients," MaryAnne says.

The COVID-19 Impact

Even before the arrival of COVID-19, IQVIA was well positioned to deliver a suite of digital solutions as part of its goal to help clinical operations evolve to a more virtual landscape.

"I think COVID-19 is highlighting gaps and challenges for patients and presenting us with

opportunities to make changes to address these issues," MaryAnne says. "We are finding more and more that sponsors are adopting electronic or verbal consent to enable patients to enroll in a study."

Sponsors are eager to accelerate their process, and in fact the innovative technologies they seek are already available. The challenge had been breaking down the barriers to adopt and maximize the value provided by innovative solutions. Site optimization is now improving, activities are accelerating, and available digital technologies are being leveraged.

"The industry is innovating at the pace of change, which is exciting for sponsors and patients," MaryAnne adds.

Recently, IQVIA conducted a survey that revealed that 93.2% of patients who participated in a virtual clinical study visit found it to be of high quality. Statistics show that one out of every five patients drops out of a clinical study. Often the reason is due to logistics. The statistics for investigators are even more dire, with one out of every two physicians dropping out of a clinical study.

MaryAnne believes that the emergence of COVID-19 has made people more interested in participating in scientific endeavors to help accelerate therapies for people who need them. In her monitoring of social media, MaryAnne observes that it isn't the CEO, chief technology officer, or even a third-party consultant who is leading digital transformation at various companies. "This is really the time to think, act, and do differently," she reflects. "COVID-19 is driving digital transformation and the current sense of urgency. I hope pharma and life-sciences companies agree there is a real need to orchestrate a focus in accelerating the right partnerships, form new relationships, and engage in innovative thinking. Now can be a time of tremendous evolution."

The Future State

With a future that envisions data and digital going hand in hand, there will be a need for best-in-class partners to disrupt traditional processes with solutions that create the shortest critical path to success. And as patients are more empowered, and as pharmaceutical and biotech companies bring the

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The goal of IQVIA's digital R&D strategy is to provide technology-based end-to-end solutions from trial design and startup to data collection to monitoring and trial conclusion.

IQVIA is a 55,000-plus-employee organization, including more than 1,100 medical doctors, 1,400 Ph.D.s, 2,500 data scientists, and 850 epidemiologists, and real-world experts. IQVIA:

- ▶ **Works with 18 of the top 20 pharmaceutical organizations**
- ▶ **Drives innovation for 400 biotech companies**
- ▶ **Is transforming clinical research with more than 20 cloud and SaaS applications — more than 80% of market share**

Source: IQVIA

human experience in healthcare more into the center of their strategies, there will be an increasing need for competency at the intersection of data science and human science — a discipline IQVIA articulates as human data science.

"Human data science inspires everyone in healthcare to reimagine what is possible and to consider the human aspect of the data, not just the raw statistics," MaryAnne explains. "It's just not enough to only be looking at data and technology — companies absolutely have to have the domain expertise to put this into the context and the language of healthcare. I see life sciences, healthcare, and data science converging in a really exciting way. I see more predictive medicines. I envision patient services extending beyond a pill or a patch to include digital solutions to help improve patient health. The horizon is clear: making clinical development part of patient care, partnering with life-science companies, and improving health outcomes through innovative digital solutions will all lead to a better quality of life for more patients globally." ■