

Volume 15 • Number 9

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Printed in the U.S.A.

Volume Fifteen, Number Nine

PharmaVOICE (ISSN: 1932961X) is published monthly except joint issues in July/Aug. and Nov./Dec., by PharmaLinx LLC, P.O. Box 327, Titusville, NJ 08560. **Periodicals postage paid** at Titusville, NJ 08560 and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to PharmaVoice, P.O. Box 292345, Kettering, OH 45429-0345.

PharmaVoice Coverage and Distribution:

Domestic subscriptions are available at \$190 for one year (10 issues). Foreign subscriptions: 10 issues US\$360. Contact PharmaVoice at P.O. Box 327, Titusville, NJ 08560. Call us at 609.730.0196 or FAX your order to 609.730.0197.

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A Crowd Mentality

Crowdsourcing is a social phenomenon that is providing a platform for everything from funding small businesses to compiling data for research and development of pharmaceuticals and medical devices. Imagine the possibilities of being able to solve and predict disease challenges through the collective amalgamation of data without boundaries.

Companies such as AstraZeneca, Lilly, GSK, Janssen, Merck, Pfizer, Sanofi, TransCelerate, and others started launching crowdsourcing and open platform initiatives several years ago to enable scientific innovation to cross boundaries between companies, academia, government, and nonprofit organizations. This month's Forum addresses how Additionally, these and other companies are expanding their approach beyond their internal development teams to issue challenges or competitions for folks to apply for grants for new research projects.



For example, in August, The Myeloma Crowd Research Initiative (MCRI), a collaboration of cancer researchers and patient advocates, announced the two winners of its first crowdsourcing and patient-led initiative to fund research in high-risk multiple myeloma, a rare malignancy of plasma cells. MCRI pledged up to \$500,000 over two years for both grants combined.

This crowdsourcing approach, the focus of this month's cover story, transcends proprietary and historically closed-door approaches to R&D and might just be the answer the industry needs to move the needle forward on diseases that have been difficult, if not impossible, to crack such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and HIV.

For example, companies like Foldit are using the crowd to look at how different proteins fold. To date, Foldit has more than half a million registered players. The company is using algorithms to predict the structure of a protein through puzzle-solving scenarios, which would aid the creation of designing new proteins to combat disease-related proteins found in HIV/AIDS, cancer, or Alzheimer's.

The Center for Game Science, which developed Foldit, is gearing to launch FolditTV to share protein-folding knowledge the community has gained over the years with a much larger audience.

2013 PharmaVOICE 100 honoree Jamie Haywood's innovative social network approach to crowdsourcing — PatientsLikeMe — is making huge strides in connecting patients to share healthcare and treatment information. Physicians' networks such as Sermo are bringing together physicians in virtual online meeting places that facilitate discussions, online learning, and medical information sharing.

Other companies such as Helix, which is featured in this month's Innovator's Corner, is developing an online open platform that aims to unleash the creativity in the world of developers, providing an infrastructure for companies and software developers who want to reach consumers through mobile or Web-based applications. The goal is to empower consumers to discover insights into their own genome through an ecosystem of content partners.

Welcome to the crowd.

Taren Grom
Editor

Their word...

DENISE MYSHKO

Managing Editor



Open innovation and crowdsourcing is increasing as a way to gain access to new ideas and to spur innovation.

ROBIN ROBINSON

Senior Editor



As more payers adopt a pay-for-performance formulary, oncology marketers need to

address the treatment's value-add to the patient journey more than ever.

KIM RIBBINK

Features Editor



Opportunities and challenges abound in the Nigerian healthcare landscape.

Special Issue

YEAR IN PREVIEW

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