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Letters

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The CRO industry is a maturing marketplace. Pharmaceutical companies and the larger biotech companies, as buyers, are more sophisticated. These companies need strategic approaches to their outsourcing needs. And, as a group, CROs have become more sophisticated sellers, offering strategic answers, in addition to tactical approaches, to meet sponsors' needs. Together, each group must work efficiently to develop partnerships, services, and a business mix in the right framework of pricing and timing. Despite the maturation of the companies serving the pharmaceutical industry, to deliver cost efficient and timely responses to the drug-development process, the industry must continue to become even more efficient at developing drugs in the future. Genomic selection, proteomics, and price controls will hamper the pharmaceutical industry's ability to maintain the profitability expected by Wall Street and shareholders unless it increases the pipeline and begins to implement process improvements.

One hallmark of a maturing market is a governing body whose purpose is to oversee the development of the industry as a whole.

In April of this year, the Association of Clinical Research Organizations (ACRO) was formed to foster continued advancement of medical-product development.

Five organizations that provide international clinical research have joined together to form the ACRO to represent the views of the drug-development industry before legislative and regulatory groups in the U.S. and other countries. The mission of the ACRO is to participate in health-policy debates concerning drug development and maintain an active interest in patient-safety issues that evolve with continued advances in pharmaceutical and biologic research.

The founding member companies of ACRO are Covance Inc., Kendle International Inc., Parexel International Corp., PPD Development, and Quintiles Transnational Corp.

Dennis Gillings, chairman of Quintiles Transnational was elected to serve as the association's first chairman. Fred Eshelman, CEO of PPD Inc., has been named treasurer and is chairman-elect for 2003.



Dennis Gillings

We will work to provide a heightened awareness of the role that CROs play in expediting the introduction of important new medicines that improve health and save lives.

"In forming this association, we believe that CROs will be even more effective in advancing the needs of patients, our customers, and our industry," Mr. Gillings says. "We will work to provide a heightened awareness of the role that CROs play in expediting the introduction of important new medicines that improve health and save lives. ACRO also will be active in the development of regulations, legislation, or initiatives that may affect our industry, as we continue to serve our customers and provide protections for clinical-trials patients."

Member companies of ACRO provide a wide range of research and development services that help pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies bring medicines to patients quickly and safely. The five founding companies employ more than 36,000 people worldwide, conduct research in 60 countries, and represent a more than \$6 billion industry.

In this month's Industry Forum more than 15 executives from the CRO, pharmaceutical, site management, technology, and analyst sectors discuss the challenges of working toward streamlining business and clinical processes to eliminate unnecessary time delays, ways to develop best operating practices, and the importance of moving toward a new paradigm in sponsor partnerships.

Taren Grom
Editor

A Maturing Market