

We're None of Us as Smart as All of Us: Joint Working with the Pharmaceutical Industry

A 2013 YouGov poll on British Attitudes to the Pharmaceutical Industry found that the public regards the pharmaceutical industry as being socially useful, globally successful and innovative, producing high quality products and services. However, underlying this perception is a feeling that the industry is untrustworthy and doesn't care about what the public thinks.¹

Anecdotally, some of the public's perception of the pharmaceutical industry as the big bad wolf is defined by Ben Goldacre's *Bad Pharma*² and le Carré's *The Constant Gardener*.³ In fact most of the pharmaceutical industry has come to recognise the strategic importance of patients and their representatives and is redefining relationships with patients, recasting themselves as more patient-centric. As people take on more risk and responsibility in their healthcare, they're migrating from a passive recipient to a joint participant in drug purchase and usage decisions, and the industry needs to take this on board. Even so, despite a significant willingness of pharma to adapt corporate strategy, the message does not always seem to reach ground level. As one UK-based national patient group noted in a 2012 survey: "I have never met one among several thousand patient contacts who felt that pharma companies have patient-orientated strategies".⁴

Although public trust of the pharmaceutical industry is relatively low, views about 'joint working' get a relatively positive reaction: 45% support the concept if there are clear NHS benefits. This positive acceptance is echoed by the majority (55%) agreeing: "I have no problem with pharmaceutical companies working in partnership with the NHS in order to cut NHS costs or improve patient outcomes, while in return, companies increase their knowledge or even make a profit".¹

RaDCom: Radiotherapy-Drug Combinations Consortium

One example of joint working is the Radiotherapy-Drug Combinations Consortium (RaDCom). This has been established by the NCRI Clinical and Translational Radiotherapy Research Working Group (CTRAd) and Cancer Research UK (CRUK)'s Centre for Drug Development (CDD). RaDCom is a collaborative network of laboratories working in partnership with the pharmaceutical industry, CRUK and other funding bodies. The key focus is to deliver high quality experimental (pre-clinical) data demonstrating that specific drugs can enhance radiotherapy treatment when used in combination. This evidence can then support early phase clinical trials of these combinations in patients. RaDCom's work will include the most appropriate tumour types, with accompanying biomarker data showing the effectiveness of the treatment where appropriate. RaDCom is engaging on a strategic level with industry, so that it becomes a key point for industrial partners seeking appropriate expertise for the delivery of pre-clinical radiotherapy-drug combination work.

RaDCom will:

- Look for proposals for pre-clinical radiotherapy-drug combination projects, in particular those which would benefit from a collaborative approach
- Make sure that projects are ready for funding
- Identify and allocate work packages to laboratories, based on expertise and/or facilities available
- Monitor projects successful in applying for funding, to ensure timely delivery
- Monitor the existing radiotherapy-drug combinations pre-clinical and early phase portfolio, in order to ensure that areas of need are addressed.

This is one example of embracing patient voice by engaging and partnering with a broader range of healthcare stakeholders to understand more fully the different needs of patients and to be able to provide tangible value to patients.

Helen Bulbeck, on behalf of the CTRAd consumers, December 2014

¹ YouGov. British attitudes to the pharmaceutical industry. 2013.

Available from: <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2013/08/30/report-british-attitudes-pharmaceutical-industry> (last accessed March 2015).

² Goldacre B. *Bad Pharma: How drug companies mislead doctors and harm patients*. London, England: Fourth Estate London, 2012.

³ Le Carré J. *The Constant Gardener*. New York: Scribner, 2001.

⁴ PatientView Quarterly. *The Corporate Reputation of Pharma - a Patient Perspective*. London: PatientView Ltd. 2013.