

THE FUTURE OF MEDICAL AFFAIRS

Five themes from MAPS Americas 2025

The recent MAPS (Medical Affairs Professional Society) Americas annual meeting, held March 23-26 in vibrant New Orleans, brought together industry leaders, innovators, and change-makers to shape the future of Medical Affairs.

HCG's presence included hosting an exhibit booth, leading two hands-on workshops, and facilitating a thought-provoking industry roundtable. In this piece, we reflect on key takeaways, share unique perspectives, and explore how the insights gained can help drive impact and innovation in Medical Affairs.

Collaboration between Medical Affairs and Commercial

With the presence, for the first time, of a "Medical/Commercial Interface" track, cross-functional collaboration is a topic most attendees would have found themselves contemplating—if not energetically discussing—at this year's meeting. The rationale for partnership between Medical Affairs and Commercial has, of course, been obvious to most people for some time. Consider, for example, the absurd notion that an omnichannel engagement strategy could ever be siloed—with

Medical orchestrating its own separate omnichannel plan. The beneficial effects of collaboration might be as much a case of mitigating bad things (e.g., misaligned strategies, duplication of effort, confusion on the part of customers) as of engendering good things (e.g., sharing of insights and expertise, implementing a personalized engagement strategy).

Regarding successes, one particularly valuable workshop presented four real-world case studies of collaborations: (1) a multidisciplinary advisory board for a gene therapy; (2) an omnichannel engagement model that delivered educational and promotional content separately to MSLs and sales reps, respectively; (3) a partnership on AI-driven solutions supporting HCP decision-making and patient education; and (4) compliant insight sharing for a cross-functional initiative to improve health equity.

Despite their shared goal of positively impacting HCP and patient journeys, it's clear that Medical and Commercial functions have a way to go when it comes to actually partnering to make this happen.

Leveraging MSLs to make omnichannel more personal

Though MSLs have long been regarded as the most important channel in Medical Affairs, several sessions at this year's MAPS Americas explored



ways to further elevate the impact of MSLs, including through boosting their role in omnichannel engagement. When strategically executed, the MSL-HCP interaction can function as both a vital input and a valuable output within an omnichannel strategy. MSL-HCP learning journeys can be tailored more effectively by using the scientific narrative as their foundation. The pipeline of MSL-provided insights on HCPs' preferences and knowledge gaps is well established, but in many organizations, there's considerable untapped potential for them to provide a feedback loop for content development, participate in identifying emerging trends, and deliver expert recommendations.

The expanding scope of Medical Affairs: engaging a diverse network of stakeholders

The MAPS Americas meeting underscored the growing recognition that the scope of Medical Affairs extends far beyond traditional prescribing HCPs. Today, Medical Affairs is tasked with engaging an increasingly diverse network of stakeholders, including nurse practitioners, pharmacists, patient advocacy groups, care partners, and even employers. These non-prescribing stakeholders play critical roles in patient care, influencing education, access, treatment adherence, and shared decision-making. Discussions at our roundtable emphasized the importance of tailoring engagement strategies to meet the unique needs of these groups while addressing challenges such as time and resource constraints and navigating compliance.

Data and AI trends in Medical Affairs

Key discussions revolved around ensuring access to the right data and effectively utilizing it to generate actionable insights. Participants throughout the meeting emphasized that having comprehensive, standardized data is essential for AI success, as it underpins accurate analysis and decision-making.

A central theme was the development of a clear and practical AI strategy. Experts advised organizations to assess their AI readiness by evaluating current data infrastructure, technological tools, and team skills. The importance of prioritizing the right test

cases was stressed, with a focus on high-value areas such as improving patient outcomes and processes within Medical Affairs functions.

Measuring the impact of AI was a key takeaway. Organizations were urged to define clear metrics to track the success of AI initiatives, which includes patient outcomes and not just operational efficiency.

Measuring and evaluating impact in Medical Affairs

The time is now for Medical Affairs to better define what impact means for the function—if we don't do it for ourselves, others will define it for us. That sense of urgency has led to a feeling of "being behind" and that more efforts are required across the industry to showcase what true impact looks like. Some key challenges identified were:

- > There has been limited success to date, and the paucity of examples from across the board is leading to delays in more companies kicking off their own impact journeys.
- > Some feel that demonstrating the value that the function brings to the overall impact is enough, whereas others feel the need to truly demonstrate what Medical Affairs does alone to define purpose.
- > While other functions within pharma focus their attention on data, more efforts and resources are needed within Medical Affairs.

On to MAPS EMEA 2025

If there are any topics that you'd like to talk to our team about or that sparked a question for us, please reach out to [Ailsa Stewart](#). We'll be in London for MAPS EMEA in May, so do connect with us there, and look out for more insights coming soon! ■



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