

IMIG

***"Attitude of General Practitioners
towards Pharmaceutical
Representatives 2005"***

- Summary -

IMIG

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Preliminary remarks

This summary contains the **results of a group discussion, a narrative interview, and an explorative interview** on the subject of the

"Attitude of General Practitioners (GPs) towards Pharmaceutical Representatives 2005".

The qualitative survey of doctors was conducted in April 2005 as part of the **IMIG Seminar** entitled **"Introduction to qualitative pharmaceutical market research"** based on selected methods (group discussion, narrative interview, exploration). Eight market researchers from six different pharmaceutical companies took part in the two-day seminar in Munich.

As part of the practical exercises one seminar attendee chaired a **group discussion** with six GPs (specialist general practitioners / generalists / internists), one attendee applied the **narrative interview technique** in an interview with a doctor, and one attendee applied the "classic" **explorative interview technique**.

The interviews were based on a **list of questions and subjects** that were drawn up in small groups during the seminar and then approved jointly in the plenary session. **Creative interviewing techniques** (comparisons) were also applied.

For documentation purposes the group discussion and the interviews were recorded **on video** with the consent of the doctors. Verbatim copies were prepared on tape for the evaluation. Selected **verbatim quotations** are used to illustrate the doctors' train of thought.

The results of the survey have qualitative information value, in other words they are not representative in the statistical sense, but they describe the **typical experiences, attitudes and expectations of general practitioners as a target group with regard to the "Pharmaceutical representative 2005"**.

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May 2005

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The GPs who were interviewed generally rate the visits by pharmaceutical sales reps positively. They value these visits as a method of imparting specialized information and they welcome them as a frequently pleasant break from their everyday work. Some doctors prefer to arrange an appointment with representatives, others leave it up to the reps when they visit. Monday morning is rated as a rather less convenient time for visits to the practice.

In the doctors' view, the "ideal pharmaceutical representative" is one who displays the following characteristics:

- Social skills
- Technical expertise
- Good preparation
- Friendliness
- Ability to adapt to the situation
- Ability to empathize with doctors
- Patience
- Seriousness
- Honesty.

The doctors would like pharmaceutical representatives to inform them honestly about the advantages and disadvantages of their drugs and to convey this information flexibly, in other words to adjust to the level of knowledge and the information needs of the doctor. Doctors (as expected) are rather sceptical about folders.

The frequent change of sales territory of pharmaceutical representatives is criticized since it prevents the development of an ongoing doctor-representative relationship based on trust. The doctors are tangibly opposed to any form of monitoring of representatives by their company.

Further training measures by the pharmaceutical companies are still welcomed by the doctors. The interviewees are particularly very interested in high quality events in small groups and in doctors' circles.

The GPs see a potential future field of activity for pharmaceutical representatives in better networking of the doctors visited by the reps with the local hospitals. In this respect they would very much welcome a more intensive exchange of information arranged by the pharmaceutical company's sales force.

From the viewpoint of the doctors even more effort should be made to achieve a relationship based on partnership between the pharma industry and the medical profession with the sales force acting as mediator.

To allow the doctor to prepare thoroughly for the visit by the sales rep it is suggested that advance notice of the visit should be given by fax or letter with details of the discussion topics.