Case Study: Life Sciences

Roche cuts feasibility process by 36%

A standardized clinical trial feasibility process powered by Cognizant's Shared Investigator Platform helps Roche find efficiencies.

As a pioneer in biotechnology, celebrating its 125th anniversary this year, Roche is dedicated to discovering and developing medicines for people with serious and life-threatening diseases, with a focus on these therapeutic areas: oncology, neuroscience, infectious diseases, immunology, cardiovascular and metabolism, ophthalmology and respiratory.

The challenge

Although feasibility is a critical component of clinical trial site selection, the company's feasibility process lacked homogeneity and consistency, resulting in challenges for both site stakeholders and its own study teams.

At a glance

An industry pioneer and veteran biotech, Roche, like other complex pharmaceutical organizations, struggled with complexity and consistency when it came to its approach to clinical trial feasibility, which led to some challenges for both site stakeholders and internal study teams.

After implementing the Cognizant Shared Investigator Platform (SIP), Roche was able to standardize its feasibility process. The new platform provided significant benefits, including:

- Streamlined feasibility questionnaires to let principal investigators (PIs) spend more time addressing critical, study-specific topics and complete questionnaires much faster
- Decreased average feasibility questionnaire completion time by 36%, from 11 to seven days
- Helped achieve a company record, reducing the average questionnaire completion time to just four days in a single month

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Determining clinical trial feasibility more efficiently

Feasibility is typically a disjointed process across the pharmaceutical industry. This means that site stakeholders have difficulty distinguishing one sponsor's feasibility questionnaires from those of other sponsors, which leaves a negative impression on site stakeholders. In addition, Roche's use of multiple systems to conduct feasibility highlighted a lack of standardization and added to the inconsistency. Because of this lack of system standardization, the same questions were sometimes asked repeatedly of the same PIs—questions such as how their facilities were set up and whether they had centrifuge equipment, etc. This repetition complicated an already time-consuming feasibility process.

Internal study teams also suffered from not having a consistent, efficient process. Given that feasibility is performed infrequently on an as-needed basis, only when a new study is initiated, global and local study teams across different therapeutic areas often had no clear guidance on the process to follow or systems to use. Similar to their site collaborators, internal study teams found the whole process very cumbersome and time-consuming.

The approach

As one of the original sponsors that helped design the platform, Roche had already embarked on transforming its clinical trial collaboration with research sites on Cognizant SIP. Roche was also one of the early adopters of the Cognizant SIP Feasibility module, having recognized the need to harmonize the feasibility process for both external site stakeholders and internal study teams.

Beyond investing in the new solution, site staff had to make time to enter all necessary data about their facility set-up and equipment (in a feasibility questionnaire) so that they could access and register to use Cognizant SIP. Once the questionnaires were completed, and the sites' facility profiles were operational, they could begin reaping the benefits of Cognizant SIP.

Getting higher value information

With all core information in the platform, Roche could focus its feasibility questionnaires solely and uniquely on protocol-specific questions to solicit high-value information. This eliminated the need to ask sites to spend time and effort providing redundant information about their facilities, making it possible to complete questionnaires in less time.

Similarly, for Roche's internal teams, implementing Cognizant SIP signaled the establishment of a streamlined process. To support internal teams with site selection activities, the company set up a Feasibility Community of Practice, composed of a team of feasibility experts who support local and global study teams in their use of Cognizant SIP. This support community allows teams to come together in an informal, low-pressure environment to get help, address their questions and reach the ultimate goal of shaving time off the feasibility process to bring medicines to patients faster.

The feasibility experts also collect and visualize data to help track progress and identify trends by country and status through an internal reporting system. Centralizing the entire clinical trial feasibility process within Cognizant SIP and using the internal tracking system enables study teams to see how countries perform against targets and start discussions with sites to address any challenges.

Business outcomes

Roche started measuring the progress of its feasibility processes with Cognizant SIP. Over the course of a 15-month period, the company decreased its average feasibility questionnaire completion time by 36%, going from 11 days to seven days. There was even a company record broken in a single month, where the average completion time across the company was reduced to only four days.

Cutting turnaround times

The improvement in turnaround time is due to several benefits achieved with the adoption of Cognizant SIP, including significantly shortening questionnaires, at times by half. This reduction lets study teams focus their questionnaires on protocol questions so PIs can address critical, study-specific topics and complete questionnaires much faster.

Roche expects these productivity gains to compound as more internal teams are onboarded to Cognizant SIP and successfully use it to drive various clinical trial processes forward.

About Roche

With a deep commitment to improving lives since its founding in 1896, Roche creates innovative medicines and diagnostic tests that help millions of patients globally. Roche was one of the first companies to bring targeted treatments to patients. Its combined strength in pharmaceuticals and diagnostics equips Roche to drive personalized healthcare forward, with two-thirds of its Research and Development projects being developed with companion diagnostics. Roche is also a leading biotech with 17 biopharmaceuticals on the market, a global leader in cancer treatments and a committed investor in innovation, with one of the highest R&D spends in the world.

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