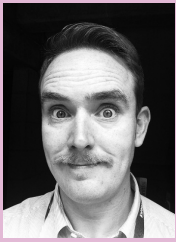# Review of Introduction to Pharmaceutical Sales Research and Analytics Course

I attended the BHBIA's Introduction to Pharmaceutical Sales Research and Analytics course at Chartridge Conference Centre, Amersham on 10th -11th March 2014. All delegates had been asked to arrive in time for a course lunch on the first day. This gave everyone the chance to meet informally before the more serious stuff began, though conversation began slowly. We were soon joined by course convenors Nick Coolican-Smith and Chris Ehinger, who facilitated friendly and open conversation throughout the group.

After lunch we moved to the training room. Nick and Chris began formal introductions, followed by each member of the group, a routine that would be repeated many times over the next day and a half. Some of the delegates were brand new to the pharmaceutical industry (myself included), while others were pharma-experienced and, having moved into more analytical roles, this 1.5 day course provided an introduction into the world of analytics in a pharmaceutical setting.

After a note on Competition Law, including a reminder of expressly forbidden topics of discussion between delegates, the course began with an overview of the changing market environment within Pharmaceuticals and the impact this has on marketing and selling styles. As someone new to the industry, I found the well-crafted introduction fit well, confirming some of what I already knew while expanding and adding to my understanding of the issues and challenges facing the Pharmaceutical industry in the coming years.

The introduction included a whistle-stop tour of the pharmaceutical industry in the UK, the relative sizes and specialities of the larger companies, as well as an extended focus on the primary customer and prescriber in the market place: the NHS. As the presentation continued it became clear that in an ever changing and competitive environment, a company must run as fast as they can just to stay where they are. The current answer to this paradox in the Pharmaceuticals industry is Key Account Management.

Kevin Das, Director at CE Consultancy (ably assisted by Nick), gave the next presentation on sales and activity data. Using the questions internal stakeholders regularly ask, and the key bits of information they are interested in, Kevin delivered insight into the types of data commonly used by analysts in Pharma as well as the tools with which they are delivered, including value delivered by the ubiquitous IMS. The key narrative was one of adding value, that we as insight professionals should seek to give more than 'data' or 'reports' and provide expert insight, which is more valuable.

After a summation of the main points from day one, we were split into two groups and given the Evening Task. Since receiving the course agenda I had been intrigued and a little nervous of what this might be. A case study was given with the aim of answering a business question. Elements of the task were divided up amongst the team and we rushed to have a presentation prepared before dinner that evening, which was to be delivered the following morning.

We reconvened at dinner along with Nick and Chris who again did a great job of hosting and keeping the conversation going. After sharing a lovely dinner and exchanging stories and anecdotes, and some sage advice from Nick and Chris, tired delegates bid their hosts good night and retreated to their respective rooms.

In the morning, each group presented back their recommendations resulting from the Evening Task. Nick and Chris provided useful feedback and made suggestions for how we could handle such business questions in future.

The first speaker of Day 2 was Arby Saboonchian of Cognizant Technology Solutions. Arby provided an insightful presentation on target setting and incentive schemes including a breakdown of their relative strengths and weaknesses. This had much relevance for me, as I'm sure it did for others in the room. I made a note as Arby was talking to make sure I received a copy of Arby's slides!

The next speaker was Lee Ronan, Head of Client Development at CSL. Lee focussed his presentation on targeting and segmentation within Pharma and we explored the pro's and con's of different approaches in our groups. Lee delivered his subject matter in a way that was enjoyable while giving an outline of the complexity involved in targeting and segmentation activities.

After lunch, Wilf Iliffe gave a talk on Sales Force structuring and resourcing. Wilf's slides and presentational style were free of clutter and straight to the point on what is a necessary yet necessarily delicate activity. Wilf covered territory reorganisation, sales force optimisation and resource allocation from a bottom up perspective. Key Account Management and how to make it work from a territory perspective was covered in what was an engaging, informative and thought provoking presentation.

The final presentation was on measuring call quality, including internal measuring processes in a Pharma setting (CRM, field visits, sales training etc) and external measures (market monitoring, message delivery, DFU, 3rd party monitoring). Chris and Nick closed the course with a summary of main topics and subjects.

I would summarise the introduction to Pharmaceutical sales research and analytics as being a great introduction to a complex and ever changing industry. The speakers were highly knowledgeable and had great experience within the industry, often in a variety of roles. Each session was interactive and engaging, designed logically with thought and delivered with clarity. I would highly recommend this course (and have) to those new to Pharma without hesitation. The course emphasises that, in an industry where much of a companies' strength lies in its pipeline, an analyst has the opportunity to have great influence on, and involvement in, strategy and decision making. Using the correct data and tools at our disposal, adding value along the way by imparting evidence based demonstrable expertise. Selecting the correct targets in valuable segments and using these to maximise opportunities is an efficient way of focussing resource and maximising benefit, while an effectively targeted, motivated and measured sales force remain key to delivering primary business objectives. The value of a good analyst does not end with a spreadsheet.