New to Healthcare Market Research?

Here are 9 Must-Know Tips

Market research with healthcare professionals (HCPs) is very different from market research with other populations. The main reason for that is there are not that many HCPs available, especially physicians.

There are just over 1 million active physicians in the U.S., and of those, about half are specialists, and half are primary care physicians (PCPs). However, if you only need to talk to specialists, for example cardiologists, you have a total of about 16,000 office-based and another 2,700 hospital staff to sample. And add onto that, your client has given you a targeted list of cardiologists important to them which could make up just half of the universe. All HCP populations are extremely limited, no matter what specific HCP respondent you need.

Add to that problem that most HCPs are extremely busy professionals, and their time is valuable. As a result, based on our experience, less than one-third of professionals in any medical category may participate in marketing research with any regularity. You can't meet your quota by sending the panel more invitations, as you can with general consumer population surveys. There are simply not enough HCPs to go around.

This limitation means there is almost no margin for error. **Here are 9 essential tips to make sure your healthcare market research project is successful:**

1. **Formulate the Sampling Plan Carefully.** Understanding the topic, the specific healthcare professional(s) you want to reach and setting up the appropriate qualifying criteria is crucial to determining what research you can complete.
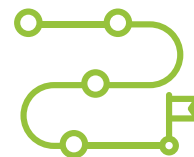
2. **Know Your Acronyms.** The healthcare world is <u>full of acronyms</u>, and if you want to conduct marketing research in healthcare, you better "talk the talk." From physician specialists such as ICE (Internal Medicine – Cardiac Electrophysiology) to PUDs (Pulmonary Disease Specialist) and ailments such as AS (ankylosing spondylitis) to T1D (type 1 diabetes), make sure you know what your respondents (and your clients) are talking about before you start collecting data.

3. Get the Appropriate Respondent. As stated above, surveying healthcare professionals is challenging so you need to make sure you are seeking the best possible respondent. Are you sure you need to only research physicians? The role of Nurse Practitioner/Physician Assistant (NPPA) is greatly expanding as a decision-maker and treatment influencer. Is their input required for your research? Or should you get the information from hospital administrators (such as the CEO or CFO), the procurement department, or other committees who frequently made purchase decisions in the hospital setting? You can save significant time and money – and get better information – by making sure you are surveying the best respondents.

4. Allow enough time. Research with HCPs usually takes much longer to complete than the average consumer or even B2B project. Because respondents are extremely busy, you will need to be flexible to meet their schedules and allow plenty of time to complete your quotas. You should also consider using asynchronous online platforms so the HCPs can participate when it is convenient for them.

5. Expect to Pay High Incentives. Incentives are a significant component of marketing research with HCPs. Remember: these are highly paid, very busy professionals who are acutely aware of the value of their time. Depending on the HCP specialty and survey length, online incentives can range from $10, for just a few minutes of their time, to over $300 for 60-minutes per physician. Qualitative interview incentives can easily average $300 or more. For group interviews or exercises which require anonymized patient chart information, you can expect to pay even more.

6. Get It Right the First Time. The cost of making a mistake in an online survey with HCPs can mean thousands of dollars in recontact fees or starting the entire project over again. Quality assurance, comprehensive testing, and daily data cleaning will save you from survey errors. When possible, pretest your survey both before and after programming to make sure the logic works, that you are using the correct lingo, and getting the information you need. This will save you programming time and ensure your survey instrument translates well to an online self-administered survey. Make sure you know how an HCP is likely to interpret each question.

7. Follow the Laws and Regulations. Understand the Physician Sunshine Act, any potential requirement for reporting under the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), and specific manufacturer guidelines. If needed, you must make clear disclaimers about these requirements and the process for reporting any potential adverse events.

8. Work With a Pro. An experienced healthcare recruiter and data collection provider is essential to making your project a success. They can help guide you to make the best and most appropriate decisions about the project. If you are not sure about your provider's experience in healthcare, ask for examples of recent projects. If you don't know the incidence rate of the audience, ask your provider if they have past experience which can assist you or ask if they can run a poll to help get you that information.

9. Ask questions. Don't be afraid to go back to your client to clarify the research objective and ask questions that come up during the feasibility and pricing process. Healthcare research is complex, and there may be a better way to get the necessary information. Asking questions of your client will create dialogue and forge a better relationship (that may lead to additional work).

A successful healthcare professional marketing research project needs a lot of up-front research and preparation to avoid missteps. With careful thought and the right research partner, you can get the information you need.

New to Marketing Research with Healthcare Professionals?

Reckner Healthcare has over 30 years' experience. Let us help you complete your next research project. **Call or contact us today!**