

Exploring a Potential Niche within Cardiac Imaging for a New Biotech Product

A biotechnology company retained Observant LLC to assess the market opportunity for a new agent used in nuclear imaging scans for cardiology patients. In order to work strategically with their pharmaceutical marketing partner for the product, the company needed to know how physicians would respond to key benefits of this potential new agent relative to current options.

To address this business question, qualitative research was undertaken with two key constituencies: cardiologists certified in nuclear medicine (who make decisions about what imaging tests patients receive) and nuclear imaging technicians (who operate the imaging devices). Even though nuclear imaging technicians do not make formal treatment decisions, their perspective was important to include because the feedback they provide to cardiologists can affect choices among options. Focus groups were employed rather than individual interviews to foster discussion among peers about the potential new agent.

Practice setting was a potentially important factor for the new agent because the significant costs associated with nuclear imaging might lead respondents in smaller offices or clinics to have different priorities than those in large hospitals. For this reason our sample frame included both hospital and office settings.

When developing the discussion guide for this research it was important to employ techniques that would illustrate the real-life application of the new product. To this end, a key focus of the interview involved running through a “typical” imaging process from start to finish, specifying the tasks involved in each step and who is involved at all times. Questions about strengths and drawbacks of the current competitive set of products and guided brainstorming a

“wish list” of attributes that a new product should have elicited insights into what is important to users.

Through this in-depth practical discussion of cardiac imaging processes and the attributes of preferred agents, Observant LLC was able to identify the likely



niche for the new product in realistic terms. It was possible to clarify the importance of certain product features to the cardiologists who select the products, as well as for technicians who conduct the scans. This perspective was important, as it helped the client see their product from the point of view of the practitioners rather from their own more restricted view as scientists and marketers.

For more information about Observant LLC’s capabilities in the medical imaging and devices markets, or our work in biotechnology and new product development, please contact info@observant.biz.