Evaluation of Medical Science Liaisons’ Perception of Job Satisfaction and Career Path Options

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Introduction
A medical science liaison (MSL) is a field-based therapeutic specialist employed by a pharmaceutical company, often possessing advanced scientific training and degrees. The MSL serves as a catalyst for collaboration between a pharmaceutical company and external thought leaders. Responsibilities of a MSL may include establishing and cultivating relationships with key opinion leaders, supporting the medical needs of a therapeutic area, disseminating medical information, facilitating the clinical research process, and collecting competitive information from the field. The MSL position is relatively new to the pharmaceutical industry and little has been done to characterize or document trends in this population.

Objective
To evaluate job satisfaction and career path opportunities among Pharmacists who currently hold or have previously held a MSL position.

Methodology
Design:
A survey was distributed electronically via Zoomerang to alumni of the Rutgers Pharmaceutical Industry Fellowship (RPIF) program. Questions centered on demographics, job satisfaction, and career path opportunities. Survey participation was optional, and responses remained confidential and anonymous. Surveys were open for completion from October 14th to November 9th, 2005. Electronic reminders were sent out on Nov 1st and 3rd. Telephone reminders were made on Nov 8th.

Population:
Approximately 300 RPIF alumni. Only those alumni who are now (or have been in the past) employed as a MSL were asked to complete the survey.

Analysis:
All analysis of survey results was completed by the study authors by Nov 21st, 2005.

Materials:
> RPIF database
> 23 question survey (7 background, 10 job satisfaction, and 6 career path questions)
> Zoomerang Surveys @ www.zoomerang.com

Results – Career Path
The total number of respondents was 38, of which 5 have moved on to other positions within their respective companies such as:
> Executive Director, Scientific Affairs
> Principal & CEO of a consulting business
> Regional Sales Director
> Director of Marketing
> Manager of Medical Science Liaisons

Results – Job Satisfaction

Discussion
38 of 40 RPIF alumni who are currently (or have been in the past) employed as a MSL responded to the survey. Of the 38 respondents, 33 currently work as MSLs and 5 have moved on to other positions within their respective companies.

The survey results revealed the following:
> Job satisfaction, location, and flexibility ranked high when evaluating MSL positions
> Almost all (94%) of the respondents reported that they work more than 40 hours a week, and 45% of respondents reported working greater than 50 hours a week
> Respondents indicated that they travel frequently, with more than 90% indicating that they spend more than 20% of their time traveling on business
> The majority of MSLs earn an annual base salary of $110,000 - $129,999
> 29 of 33 (88%) of respondents reported receiving an annual bonus. The most frequently reported range was $15,000 - $19,999.
> 67% of respondents reported a moderate stress level (on a 5-point scale) as a MSL

Results of this study demonstrate that many alumni of the RPIF program have successfully obtained MSL positions within one year of completing the program. The majority of RPIF alumni who are MSLs have chosen these positions based on job satisfaction, flexibility, and salary. RPIF alumni holding MSL positions have a high job satisfaction, and some have pursued a variety of career path options, including management and consulting opportunities.

References
> Rutgers Pharmaceutical Industry Fellowship website:  http://pharmafellows.rutgers.edu
> Data on file, Institute for Pharmaceutical Industry Fellowships, Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy, Rutgers University

Disclosure
All authors of this study are paid employees of Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey.

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JGA37 did email addresses really limit responses? we got 38 out of a possible 40!

Please report any incorrect emails to Svetlana, and hopefully any correct ones you identified as a result of this project.

James Alexander, 11/21/2005