

PMR Challenges #1:

In a world of growing reliance on AI and ML, big data has become king – a panacea for all information desires, a source of undisputed truth. The reality is that primary market research (PMR) is as important as ever, especially to understand deeper insights beyond behavioral or other patterns. Unfortunately, PMR is as much of an art as a science and generating valid insights with PMR requires knowing the traps and pitfalls to avoid.

With this series of brief summaries of our observations, we aim to raise awareness of inherent MR risks and point towards solutions that can ensure you don't fall prey to the most common mistakes made in PMR ... and to avoid the embarrassment of *"the results can't be right - they don't align with other data I have – how do I explain why they are 'wrong' (or maybe not???)!"*.

Respondent Bias – how it can skew PMR Results

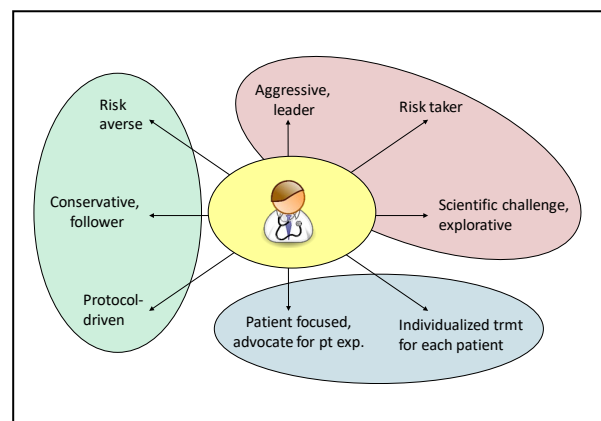
A typical scenario: You are charged to run a market research to better understand if, when, and how often health care professionals will prescribe your company's product. A lot rides on this research, including revenue forecasts, the marketing / promo strategy, and even investment decisions related to the sales force allocation and messaging.

When planning the primary research, be sure to think of the following factors that will impact your findings.

Respondent Personality

Many factors drive a HCP's decision to use a particular product, especially a newly launched product. Instead of the standard approach to survey 100 "high volume" Rx'ers (based on screening answers that might be inflated because some HCPs don't want to miss a chance to earn an easy honorarium) and segment them by specialty and treatment setting (e.g., hospital size), we favor "getting to know" a prescriber's personality profile and using it to differentiate the answers we receive.

On the right, we illustrate a handful of attitudinal characteristics, which have been shown to impact a prescriber's propensity to adapt new products into their treatment regimen.





As a first step to better evaluate a respondent’s answers, we need to know what archetype personality best describes that respondent. A few carefully designed “golden questions” can give us a high confidence of being able to correctly categorize each respondent into “red”, “green”, or “blue segments” – which not only gives us valuable input for our revenue forecast, but also feeds into product positioning and individual messaging decisions post launch.

Preferences vs. Actual Behaviors

Often overlooked is the fact that respondents’ answers tend to provide us their rational preferences, not their actual behaviors. We must tease out the differences between “preference share”, which is what you are most likely to capture with PMR, and actual use of a product, which will be driven by additional contextual factors. A prescriber’s decision is ultimately based on many, often conflicting factors. It is critical to understand these in the context of the respondent and their replies.

Structural Influences

Illustrative Examples:

- Treatment guidelines
- Hospital Formulary restriction (e.g., need dept. head sign off)
- Product availability, pharmacy stocked
- Patient insurance
- Prior authorization requirements
- Patient history (e.g., allergies, co-morbidities, etc.)
- Budgets (cost avoidance)
- Incentives (rewards for certain behaviors)



Emotional Factors

Illustrative Examples:

- Habit (always done it this way)
- Risk tolerance / avoidance (new = risky)
- Conflict avoidance (have to justify / explain my actions)
- Confidence (I can’t go wrong with this)
- Convenience (change requires extra work)
- Image (by doing X, I look competent)
- Belonging (all others do this / KOLs do this)
- Deferential (others must know more; I do the same)

This illustration shows clearly how numerous “outside” and “personal” factors may influence the HCP’s prescribing habits ... EVEN THOUGH they might or might not prefer your product.

Respondent Bias

The most challenging reality to account for is that respondents don’t or can’t always tell you “the truth”. Limited information on a product profile may introduce a positive bias. Optimism and a desire to get newer, better products builds enthusiasm during a survey that won’t necessarily play out in reality. Sending a message to the (unknown) research sponsor may also cause respondents to shape their answers – this does not only apply when asking what price they’d be willing to pay.

It is not uncommon to accept the inaccuracies of PMR and just discount what we hear from market research. A better solution is to know how PMR can generate skewed results and address these critical challenges during the planning and design phases of each research project.

If you would like to discuss how to conduct PMR that you can be confident in, please contact us at info@coagent-hc.com.