



# Selecting a Specialty Data Aggregator: Best Practices

## THE SPECIALTY PHARMACY MARKETPLACE

has experienced exponential growth in just a few short years. As the market continues to mature, so, too, do the service and data visibility options available to manufacturers. Many companies boutique services for data aggregation, but require manufacturers to find alternate services for channel data management (shipments, sale out, etc), or necessitate complex integration with a third-party reporting platform. In your search for a data provider, look for one able to handle both channel and patient data for a complete, longitudinal view of the product and patient journey.

A data aggregation service provider becomes an extension of an organization and a partner. When selecting a partner, don't underestimate the complexity of integrating multiple technologies to fit business needs and the added cost of multiple service providers if you choose that path. Select this partner wisely, ensuring that the service provider is experienced, methodical, and able to deliver innovative distribution and patient care strategies outside the scope of traditional patient monitoring and data quality metrics.

A key takeaway from this article is this: It's crucial to involve a data aggregator early on. Their knowledge and expertise can help inform distribution strategy and guide the establishment of data agreements. Ensure that their reporting capabilities are in line with your organization's goals and they have a track record of efficiently integrating disparate data to better assist in achieving optimal patient outcomes.

## DATA TO INFORM THE DISTRIBUTION STRATEGY

Leading data aggregators have experience working with multiple specialty providers and can offer valuable input into finalizing

a distribution and services strategy. They understand providers' reporting capabilities regarding the quality, timeliness, and accuracy of sending data and can make recommendations that align with the unique needs of a specialty product launch.

A best-in-class data aggregator has experience supporting numerous specialty launches and can share recommended approaches to optimize patient care data specific to a product's therapeutic category, as well as business goals and peak



operational performance. ValueCentric is uniquely suited to suggest innovative analytics solutions, largely due to 15 years of experience in supporting launches across a wide range of products in different distribution and therapeutic profiles.

In the case of a limited distribution product launch, consider the benefits of longitudinal patient tracking (complete de-identified tracking of the patient journey). Look to a data aggregator to provide Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)-compliant de-identification across each data source, thereby ensuring that a consistent identifier is used across the entire patient journey for accurate reporting.

Leading aggregators will provide flexibility with this process, allowing the de-identification to occur at either the aggregator's HIPAA-compliant facility or the specialty provider. This process can be critical to satisfying the individual data policies at a specialty pharmacy network's provider locations, with respect to how they handle protected health information, and guarding an organization from liability by complying with legal and regulatory standards.

Once the distribution strategy is set, an aggregator should play a key role in the contracting process with the specialty pharmacy network, providing guidance and recommending data standards and metrics to include in purchasing and service agreements.

## CONTRACTING GUIDANCE

When selecting a data aggregator, look for one that offers consulting services prior to launch to help streamline the contracting process and assist in constructing agreements with clear data standards and enforcement and compliance leverage. This partner will provide insight into key performance indicators, including metrics to monitor both patient services and the quality of the data reported by the specialty provider. Well-defined data exhibits can then be included in the contracts that delineate data elements to be reported, along with quality and patient de-identification requirements. If performance incentives are engineered into the agreements, ensure the aggregator can support the process of measuring compliance and, ideally, automate the performance reporting with on-demand access or sharing with specialty provider partners.

ValueCentric is working with numerous manufacturers that are launching their first specialty product. Over the past year, several

*(continued on page 34)*



(continued from page 32)

manufacturers have successfully launched, and the team is working with many more preparing for launch. With each of these partnerships, the ValueCentric team was engaged from the data contracting process to launch. By involving the team early, manufacturers were able to hit the ground running, using actionable data to monitor performance and improve overall patient care.

REPORTING AND ANALYTICS

The data aggregator is ultimately responsible for the usability of the data, which is accomplished through patient-monitoring metrics and quality control reporting that allow the manufacturer to quickly pinpoint and address issues affecting patient care. The data aggregator will provide a means to measure the following as they relate to quality data.

- **TIMELINESS:** Are data provided according to the agreed-upon schedule? Are corrections provided in a timely manner?
- **ACCURACY:** Do data elements comply with business rules and reconcile with other data sources?
- **COMPLETENESS:** Are all required fields populated to support data agreements and negotiated key performance indicators?

Data aggregators must be able to process data as soon as it is available rather than batching data to be processed. This makes the results of the quality control process almost immediately available, so both manufacturers and specialty providers can be alerted when data are not reported according to the contract. Standard operating procedures should be established to clarify what is expected of the specialty provider, the aggregator, and the manufacturer when an issue occurs. The aggregator then manages the entire process—as well as relationships with specialty providers—following the defined, detailed resolution and escalation process to resolve any issues as efficiently as possible.

**EXAMPLES OF DATA QUALITY METRICS**

- Percentage of files received on time
- Number of errors and time to resolve
- Percentage of records, with each element complete for each status
- Number of duplicate records identified
- Percentage of patients by status
- Length of time at a particular status

Be sure to ask the aggregator for a specialty pharmacy network “scorecard,” an ideal tool to measure performance. The scorecard allows for quick assessment of an organization’s quality metrics and the ability to further investigate outliers or trend breaks for rapid resolution and improvement. Also consider the data aggregator’s ability to provide trending for patient metrics such as dispensed quantity and patient status aging, as well as reconciliation of products’ sales volume against dispensing activity. This form of granular data provides a detailed view into product placement and helps ensure the product reaches the patients who need it.

ValueCentric’s extensive experience with electronic interchange distribution data provides a framework to monitor product move-

ment from the distribution center or third-party logistics provider all the way through the dispensed prescription via an all-in-one reporting and analytics platform. Coupled with the proprietary scorecard, this gives clients access to a complete view of data quality and product performance in a single platform.

As a result of progress milestones legislated by the Drug Supply Chain Security Act, serialization and lot number reporting will become the new standard. The market will demand that multiple stakeholders be able to track individual products down to the pharmacy level. Imagine the power of these data at your fingertips: With visibility into lot numbers and expiration, the challenges of returns accrual and recall management will be a thing of the past. The data aggregator should be prepared for this imminent and consequential change in the data paradigm looming just around the corner.

**KEY PATIENT METRICS TO CONSIDER**

- **Medication possession ratio:** Measures a specialty pharmacy’s ability to keep patients compliant
- **Patient status aging:** Ensures patients are not held up by administrative hurdles
- **Hub efficiency:** Marries patient status with prescription activity
- **Time to fill:** Ensures minimizing of patient wait time

AN EVOLVING MARKET AND EXPANDING PORTFOLIOS

As specialty product portfolios expand, legacy data aggregation solutions often sit in multiple formats and platforms. This has been driven primarily by a strategy of “1 product, 1 solution,” even to the degree in which similar products may have different specialty pharmacy networks for the same manufacturer. This created a challenging situation for manufacturers wanting to make changes to their specialty pharmacy network or the data they receive and use. Having disparate specialty pharmacy networks over multiple data aggregation systems can result in duplicate efforts, high costs, and an inability to achieve a holistic view of a business.

Manufacturers should seek a single, flexible, scalable solution that can evolve and meet their needs as they introduce new products and grow their portfolios. ValueCentric’s data platforms and solutions are designed to be flexible and efficient, and take a holistic view in meeting an organization’s business goals and working seamlessly with specialty pharmacy network partners. ValueCentric’s ValueTrak platform readily accommodates additional products, new data sources, and new data elements because it is highly configurable and eliminates the need for custom coding and extract/transform/load. Customers can feel comfortable that ValueTrak will meet their needs as they continue to evolve in the future. ♦

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**JOHN GIANNOURIS** has more than 25 years of experience in the life sciences industry. As vice president of Specialty Pharmacy Services at ValueCentric, he is responsible for leading the company’s strategic efforts to further expand offerings related to data aggregation, integration, and reporting. Prior to joining ValueCentric, Giannouris was a senior principal at IMS Health and spearheaded the formation and growth of their Specialty Pharma Data Integration practice. Previously, he held information management leadership roles in sales, marketing, and sales operations at Bristol-Myers Squibb and Merck.