

Medical Affairs Pillars of Impact:

The five pillar model to structure your planning, discussions, execution and measurement of impact

Strategic Leadership and Governance

KOL planning +
engagement

①

Identification,
mapping, setting
goals, building
and maintaining
relationships

Gathering
insights

②

Reactive and
proactive
insights
gathering to
inform strategy
and activities
and improve
care

Data
dissemination

③

Sharing
information on
science,
disease,
treatments and
other topics in a
non-promotional
way

Data generation,
medical projects

④

Care improving
projects, patient
access, data
generation to
improve health
care

Internal support

⑤

Internal training,
support with
materials,
dossiers,
internal
scientific expert

Foundation:

interpersonal skills, scientific knowledge, Medical Affairs knowledge and skills, self development, flexibility and enthusiasm

The Impact of Medical Affairs, a five pillar model

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Introduction:

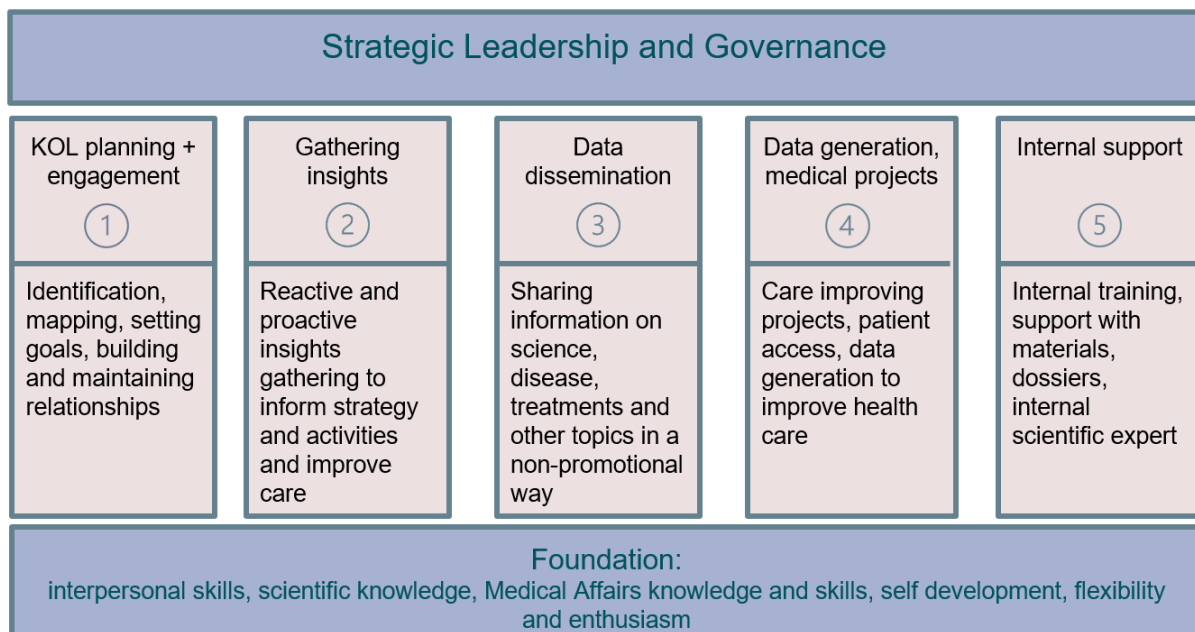
Medical Affairs plays a critical role in the success of pharmaceutical companies. The department has an important strategic role to play, leveraging their understanding of the health care arena, their closeness to important external stakeholders, their deep scientific knowledge and understanding of the workings of a pharmaceutical company.

Besides their strategic role, Medical Affairs has strong, peer to peer connections with Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) and other stakeholders, and their tactics have the potential to create a huge positive impact for patients, HCPs and internal stakeholders.

Despite this evident importance of Medical Affairs, the department often seems to struggle to explain, demonstrate and improve their impact. One of the reasons for this challenge is that the activities are divers and it can be complex to describe the exact responsibilities and contributions. Also, there is no consensus on how to measure and demonstrate the impact, which is often long term and difficult to quantify.

This paper presents you with a model that will enable Medical Affairs teams to easily describe, demonstrate and improve their role and added value. The model also has a practical role to play in Medical Planning, division of responsibilities, job descriptions and similar activities.

The Five Pillars of Medical Affairs Impact:



The Five Pillars of Medical Affairs Impact model structures the activities and impact of Medical Affairs in an easy to understand, comprehensive way. All responsibilities of Medical Affairs are captured within these five pillars, while their activities sometimes can support one pillar, or several at the same time.

For example: while organising a scientific symposium, the MSL or Medical Advisor is likely to have (1) an impact on KOL planning and engagement during their interactions with the speakers, (2) to gather Insights during the symposium while also doing (3) Data dissemination via the information that is shared with the audience.

As this figure shows, the pillars are not isolated, but they are supported by a foundation of knowledge, skill and personality, and they themselves are supporting the top layer of Strategic Leadership and Governance.

Applications:

This model can be applied in any situation where the responsibilities and impact of Medical Affairs are explored. The five pillars will facilitate a structured approach, enabling a clear and easy to use overview of Medical Affairs.

Some examples are:

- When writing a Medical or Brand Plan: The 5 pillars are the perfect structure to use for planning: each of the pillars represents an essential responsibility of the department. Your plan should contain the activities you will undertake for each pillar.
- When discussing impact: if you are trying to explain your impact in a succinct way, it is easy to become chaotic or forget something. Using the structure of the five pillars will allow you to paint a complete, simple and convincing picture.
- When describing your job and role to internal stakeholders in job interviews or other settings.
- When describing your role to external stakeholders such as HCPs and patients.
- When prioritizing tasks and when having discussions with internal stakeholders on roles and responsibilities.
- When considering how to increase the impact of your plans, activities and projects.

Short description of the five pillars:

1. KOL Planning and Engagement:

The importance of Key Opinion Leader (KOL) Planning and Engagement by Medical Affairs cannot be overstated. KOLs are instrumental in ensuring proper use of medication and the generation of compliant data and insights.

It is important to realise that the KOL network may consist of different types of stakeholders, such as physicians, nurses, Digital Opinion Leaders, Rising Stars and others.

Having a strong relationship based on mutual respect and trust with the KOLs in the Therapeutic Area is essential for correct and successful use of medication in the field. Due to the non-promotional nature of the role, the deep scientific knowledge and the access to scientific resources within the company, Medical Affairs is the perfect candidate to build such relationships.

Building a KOL network starts with identification and mapping of KOLs, but it also requires strategic planning and most importantly, the interpersonal skills to build this relationship, always keeping mutual interests in mind.

It is important to consistently provide added value and interact with integrity to achieve a peer to peer relationship based on trust.

2. Insights gathering:

Insights are the gold that Medical Affairs brings to the table.

Their thorough understanding of the Therapeutic Area, treatments, patients and science, combined with the privilege and ability to have deep and meaningful discussions with external stakeholders, puts Medical Affairs in the perfect position to gather Insights.

Insights gathering should be a pro-active, strategic and well-thought through process. Medical Affairs should be fully aware of the information and Insights needs of internal stakeholders and should make a plan on how to gather these Insights. Many Medical Affairs tactics are very suitable for gaining Insights, and which tactic is employed will depend on the type and complexity of the Insight and the stakeholder that should be engaged.

A process should be in place to report the Insights back to the internal stakeholders in a way that ensures action is taken and Insight is fully utilized.

3. Data Dissemination:

This is probably the most visible, easily measurable and well-known pillar of them all: the sharing of information with external stakeholders.

Data Dissemination is intertwined with pillar 2: gathering Insights, as all communication should be a two-way street and a combination of sharing and receiving information.

Medical Affairs has a large number of tactics that can be used to disseminate data: face to face conversations, scientific presentations, symposia, webinars, educational events, podcasts and eLearning; they are all ways to disseminate data. The challenge lies in choosing the right tactic that will ensure the right information reaches the right people in the right way.

Whether or not data dissemination can be done pro-actively or only reactively depends on the topic, recipient, format and country (local regulations across the world differ greatly).

Recently, Medical Affairs has been adopting more and more omnichannel strategies to increase the impact of their communication. This is a good way to meet the needs of the external stakeholders, who have come to expect information to be available to them via different channels and formats, at a time that is convenient to them.

4. Data Generation and Medical Projects:

This pillar is probably the pillar where Medical Affairs has the most direct impact on patients' lives.

The scientific, non-promotional role of Medical Affairs allows for activities such as setting up projects to improve patient care or organising early access or compassionate use programs. Such projects are incredibly powerful for patient care improvement and, when done in partnership with external stakeholders, can also reinforce the commitment of the company to improvement of healthcare.

Another very impactful activity of Medical Affairs is data generation. The impact is there for the patients who participate, the investigators in the study, but also for all internal and external stakeholders who will use the outcomes for their future actions and decisions.

5. Internal support:

The pillar of internal support represents all activities that are undertaken to support internal stakeholders.

Examples of those activities are: onboarding and ongoing training of commercial colleagues, providing scientific updates, support with development of different materials (such as promotional or informational leaflets, PPTs, websites, etc) input into Market Access dossiers, briefing of consultants, etc.

For the day to day working of the pharmaceutical company, this support provided by MA is essential and expected. At the same time, however, it is relatively invisible and often not taken into account when resources and impact are discussed. This can lead to issues because the time investment for these activities can be substantial, especially for the Medical Advisor. This is why it is very important that these supportive activities are noted in the Brand or Medical Plan, as well as in year goals.

Foundation:

Medical Affairs work is built on a strong foundation of scientific knowledge, interpersonal skills, Medical Affairs knowledge and skills, business acumen, a willingness to learn and develop and a drop of entrepreneurship.

It is extremely important to be aware of this foundation, because it requires time, effort and attention. Staying up to date with the latest science in the Therapeutic Area, such as scientific literature, going to congresses, attending webinars and trainings is time consuming for Medical Affairs.

Also, being familiar and compliant with all rules and regulations, SOPs and LOPs that are inextricably connected to Medical Affairs activities is a major but vital task.

In addition to scientific knowledge, Medical Affairs should also increase and maintain other capabilities, such as interpersonal skills and business acumen. In many cases, there is very little time set apart for training on those topics, even though they are essential to the success and impact of the department.

Building and maintaining this knowledge and skill is essential for Medical Affairs to be able to perform their jobs well, but the time spent on doing so is often not included in the expectations of management.

Strategic Leadership and Governance:

Medical Affairs has a very important role in the strategic direction of the company, informing not only R&D strategy, but also communications and actions once the product has entered the market. In addition, they are often looked at as role model on compliance, ethical behaviour and scientific balance. These leadership capabilities need nurturing and room to grow.

Conclusion:

When it comes to the Medical Affairs role and impact, the Five Pillars of Medical Affairs Impact model can be a useful way of structuring the contribution of the department. The model can be used in any situation where a structured approach towards the activities, responsibilities and impact of Medical Affairs is needed.

It will help in many ways to empower Medical Affairs Teams and increase understanding from both internal and external stakeholders.

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