



## Conducting Patient Engagement



# Community Advisory Boards

## Tool 7: Practical briefing guidance for pharmaceutical companies

## Introduction to the CAB toolkit

### Community Advisory Boards: **Practical briefing guidance for industry**

It is recommended to brief pharmaceutical company associates prior to a Community Advisory Board (CAB), as it is good practice for every external activity. Explaining the objectives of the CAB, how CABs work and providing some practical tips will help to ensure associates are well prepared for the meeting. This becomes especially important for associates with no or little experience with CABs.

**The nature and objectives of CABs should be transparently communicated:**

- CABs are:
  - driven by the patient community (e.g. patient organisation (PO) or similar network). They invite the relevant stakeholders and propose the agenda and timing for the meeting(s).
  - a way to foster a two-way dialogue and long-term relationships between patients and the pharmaceutical industry (hereafter industry), to ultimately improve patients' well-being and outcomes.
- CABs can help:
  - to gain deeper understanding of the needs, concerns and views of the patient community and help to address challenges that patients face in accessing diagnosis, monitoring, treatment and care.
  - to develop clinical trials with a further enhanced patient-focus and improve the experience of patients participating in the trials.
  - to build capacity and knowledge in both industry and the patient community

### **How do CABs work?**

- The CAB organisers send the invite to the company (e.g. participants from clinical development, medical affairs, market access, patient relations, etc.).
- The CAB sets the agenda and picks the topics which are the most important for the community and CAB members chair the meetings. The agenda is discussed with industry in



advance. Additional topics of mutual interest can be suggested and, if appropriate, added to the agenda.

- During the meeting, participants discuss in confidentiality key information e.g. in research and on access
- The CAB produces the minutes which includes follow-up actions (participants sign confidentiality agreements). In some cases, public minutes to inform the patient community are also developed.
- The PO/network organising the CAB provides training to CAB members.

## Practical tips - things to keep in mind

### Make sure that the presentation is clear

Although CAB members will be well prepared for the meeting, they may not be aware of all the acronyms and short forms that are used within a pharmaceutical company (and they also vary from one company to the other). It is a good practice to eliminate such terms in the speech and slides and/or spell them out if used.

Assume CAB members know the basics, tailor the information accordingly and make sure all members can follow your presentation (e.g. check frequently for comprehension: 'Am I making sense?', 'Are you following me?', 'Any questions so far?'). CAB members will let you know if there is anything that they did not understand or needs further clarification.

### Be prepared to be challenged

Many members of the CAB have attended several meetings with industry and have experience and great understanding of the topics under discussion. Be prepared for a constructive dialogue and high-level and well-informed questions.

CAB members will pose questions on behalf of the community. They may challenge some of the information shared with them or presented at the meeting. Be prepared to be asked challenging or probing questions and for some CAB members to be assertive and to express a perspective or opinion which might be different from the one from industry. These questions, opinions or concerns can help to understand what it is important to the community. Avoid using phrases like:

- "We can't talk about that because of legal/compliance reasons".
- "We're a big company and change takes a long time."

- “There’s no way we could ever do that for A, B, C reasons.”
- “It doesn’t matter what Health Care Professionals (HCPs) or patients think. This is what regulatory agencies expect from pharma.”
- “It’s too late to change that now. We can’t do anything about it.”

The topics under discussion are of great relevance to the patient community. They are talking about their own lives, the lives of loved ones or of those they represent. Be open and listen. If necessary, ask questions and ensure to get the clarification needed.

### **Be open, honest and transparent**

The CAB members have signed confidentiality agreements. Information should be shared freely within the comfort zone of the pharma representative(s). Be honest when you don’t know something and commit to looping back with the requested information. Be humble and acknowledge the CAB’s feedback and be prepared to relay feedback both ways and explain where amends are or are not possible.

### **Participate**

CABs are meant to support a two-way dialogue. This is a golden opportunity to ask burning questions and gain insights from the patient community. Openly express views - even if different from those of the CAB members.

### **What do you want from POs?**

POs/networks are genuinely interested in a long-term and sustainable relationship with pharmaceutical companies. This is one of the reasons why they set up CABs. Equally, efforts need to be made to understand what the patient community is asking of the Company and the role of each individual in this.