

Market Access Trends



Healthcare & Life Sciences
by PageGroup



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Introduction

Market access has been growing within the life sciences sector largely due to the upward trajectory of demand for talent to ensure access to drugs all over the world. This is a result of patient need across the globe, particularly during the pandemic.

This eBook reflects the insights of our life science consultants across the continents. They recruit, consult and partner with life science focused companies to find C-suite profiles, expert professionals and the necessary support teams that keep the trajectory of business moving forward.

We interviewed our experts to uncover the most important trends that you need to be aware of and how those trends may affect your talent acquisition efforts.

In this eBook, we highlight how market access is flourishing within the life sciences industry. Highly specialised technical and negotiation skills make it difficult to recruit for this role, however, some companies have been highly successful by offering a competitive package and knowing the value of the talent they need.

You will find some sound advice, elements to be aware of, and opportunities that our partners from Germany, Spain, Taiwan, Brazil and the UK have discovered that might be useful to you. Feel free to reach out to any of our collaborating consultants in the book to talk about how we can find the right person for your organisation.

On behalf of the life sciences team at PageGroup, I wish you an enjoyable read.

Kind regards,
Patrick Hollard



Market access in flux

Life Science companies seek market access professionals to navigate the complicated middle ground between governments, payers and manufacturers

Nothing has become more abundantly clear in the era of COVID-19 than the value of market access: ensuring patients get vital drugs and treatments when they need them, preferably at an affordable price. With the amount of money being poured into research and development over the years and the increased financial burden on different healthcare systems due to population growth, chronic diseases, longer life spans, and, of course, a global pandemic, this is not always an easy task. For this reason, market access departments and professionals are playing a more significant role in life sciences organisations – in order to shorten the timeline to bring treatments to market, and to negotiate pricing, reimbursements and prescription guidelines between a number of entities on a national or more local level.

Market access professionals must consider several factors and shifting parts. Scientific breakthroughs related to disease and the body are one such consideration, and technological advances quickly changing the face of the market are another. Tailored treatments aimed at smaller populations and a country or region's new legislation are equally important. Market access professionals also have to think about what weighs on payers: "How do they measure

value? What would be the cost of one treatment compared to the benefit of another?" They must also consider how all these elements fit together.

There has been a shift from the focus on product access to patient access, creating more of a "big picture" approach: Do patients have awareness of their disease and what treatments are available to them? Can they get to hospitals or clinics and pharmacies for diagnoses, equipment and drugs (or is there some barrier, like distance)? Lastly, can patients afford the treatments and medications offered to them? During the pandemic, we've seen that even if the answer is yes to all these questions, they may refuse treatments that might be available, beneficial and cost effective (or free) for them.

Not all tech advances are created equal

Across Europe, PageGroup consultants have been remarking on technological and digital upgrades driven by government and financial incentives to innovate. In Asia, however, the will to advance technologically is countered by high cost.

Alexander Piepjohn, Michael Page Hamburg, explains that a lot of hospitals in Germany are

not state-of-the-art now, but they are receiving subsidies from the government to make changes. For example, a new law put into place concerns the future of hospitals; the state is giving many of them financial support to modernise themselves.



Pharmaceutical, medical devices and lab tech/diagnostic companies are incentivised to develop and commercialize innovation that helps hospitals to modernize their infrastructure. This is an expected accelerator because they focus on bringing more innovation into the German market in a short period of time.”

Alexander Piepjohn
Manager
Michael Page Hamburg

In Spain, some of the great challenges the country faces are digitising processes, implementing new health technologies and telemedicine, and navigating artificial intelligence to incorporate it into the changing flow of work and patient care. A market access department must be up-to-date to understand these new realities,” says Vanessa Sempere, Michael Page, Madrid.



They have to be prepared to find and propose new models of collaboration between the NHS and pharmaceutical companies at the partner level, in order to serve patients and society by taking care of their health.”

Vanessa Sempere
Consultant
Michael Page Madrid

On the other hand, in Taiwan, a small country of about 23 million people or so, advances in technology are difficult to implement because the population is used to low-cost treatments and drugs in their advanced healthcare system. “It’s relatively harder for us to get new technology, given that new technology and drugs are getting more expensive,” says Jenny I Wang, Michael Page, Taipei.



We don’t really have the mindset for a self-pay market, because we rely heavily on reimbursement. So that’s where market access comes in, with an important role, because multinational pharmaceutical companies are trying to get their drugs to be reimbursed, so they can increase their order amount– their revenue, their sales target.”

Jenny Wang
Manager
Michael Page Taiwan



In Brazil, technology is also limited. Ricardo Guerra, Michael Page, São Paulo, says:



In some countries, they struggle with raising the price to obtain more profit when selling to the government, but here in Brazil, as tech isn't as developed, there is a huge regulatory step for products from other countries and to regulate new technologies. From there we can negotiate volume and prices then show the benefits and cost-effectiveness in treatment costs to the buyers."

Ricardo Guerra
Senior Manager
Michael Page Taiwan



Clients should be ready to woo

The market access role is a very competitive one, and currently there aren't many who are able to fill it. Though the headcount has increased dramatically over the last few years, existing talent is still very limited, according to Wang. Similar to other healthcare and life science positions, companies need to compete for their talent, not the other way around, offering attractive packages and titles, interesting projects, or both, to hook candidates. Getting them to change jobs may be tricky, however, as the market access domain seems to be quite a small world.

Emma Adams, Michael Page, London, explains that in her sector, market access professionals need to work to gain Health Technology Assessment (HTA) approval, considering competitor drugs and public demand.



Within market access there are a broad range of roles that clients are looking for: statistical analysis, health economic modelling, and HTA submission experience, on top of the more classic commercial skills with new product launches. This means that there is a diverse candidate market, with a shortage of skills in more technical areas that are in high demand."

Emma Adams
Business Director
Michael Page London

Adams advises clients to approach the market correctly the first time by being open to contractors and temporary workers, particularly when working with tight deadlines. Larger organisations are creating attractive training programs, benefits packages and rapid career progression to ensure they attract the best talent and keep them on board.

Candidates know they are in high demand and lean towards more flexibility and control over their own work.

The same is true in Brazil. Guerra advises quick action when a candidate fits the bill. “As we are very close to full employment for the pharma industry, as soon as you see you need someone, move fast,” he urges. “Not only are all those they would look for employed, but they’re well taken care of and not keen on leaving. As soon as you detect the need – go to market with good employer branding and a good narrative in order to secure top talent.”

Piepjohn agrees that departments are growing, while the number of potential market access candidates is relatively constant, which leads to a recruitment challenge. Market access candidates are very content-oriented. It's not only about getting more money at another company – they will get more money, because they have high value.

“It's obvious that if they change, they will earn more,” he says. “But they don't only change for that reason. They change for the content of the projects, for the complexity of what they will do in a new company. This advice we can translate to the clients: when clients want to attract market access professionals by themselves or through recruiting companies, I think they have to really sell the complexity, the content, the plan of what they will do. It's not an application from a candidate to a client; it's more an application from a client to a candidate.”



Candidates hold the cards if they have technical and soft skills

That said, the demands are high. Candidates have to be a jack-of-all-trades of sorts, mastering both communication, numbers, and organisation. Candidates should have internal knowledge of healthcare systems and the ability to present innovative value proposals and added value that can complement the service offered by the pharmaceutical industry, says Sempere.

“Candidates should be very present in the day-to-day life of hospitals and in direct contact with stakeholders, identify and anticipate changes, identify the needs to be covered, and present themselves as a partner in solutions by transmitting the value proposition of their companies,” she adds. “The positions they are investing in and promoting are strategic pricing and health economics, seeking new business models from a mix of financial and commercial knowledge.”

Meanwhile, in the UK, Adams says candidates should focus on gaining experience in more technical areas of market access, such as health economic modelling, epidemiology, outcomes research, and real-world evidence, on top of relevant product launches or HTA experience.



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Vanessa Sempere
Consultant
Michael Page Madrid

In terms of their soft skillset market access and regulatory professionals have something in common. Both work in a complex field and are very much detail-oriented. The type of commitment to what they are doing is somehow similar within the two roles. “Market access people have to talk with and convince stakeholders”, Piepjohn says. “They work with doctors, health insurance funds, patient groups, health economical / political associations and organizations and have to “sell” the value proposition of a therapy or diagnostic test. They are, in a way, the regulatory businesspeople, if I have to summarise the personality of an average market access person in one.”

Wang agrees that negotiating skills are vital, as well as lobbying and the ability to convince doctors, experts, and patient groups of the value of a product. They have to have a strong number sense, because they need to do a lot of calculations modelling or setting up of different scenarios and forecasts.

“I think candidates who are interested in doing market access need to do more homework rather than doing the job because they think the role is hot right now. They need to do more homework than they think they should,” Wang says. “You have to be really market flexible and creative, since you can never predict the issues you’ll encounter, and you have to be really open-minded, continue learning and be a strong negotiator.”



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Jenny Wang
Manager
Michael Page Taiwan

KEY TAKEAWAYS



Though technological advancements are sought after and valued in the East and West, sometimes the trade-off in terms of cost leaves patients unwilling or unable to adopt what’s available. Still, many countries are eager to make changes toward modernisation – especially with the help of government aid.



Clients have very little negotiating room when it comes to attracting talent; rather, they’ll be most persuasive when they can highlight the complexity and interest of future projects in addition to a generous package.



Candidates, even though their applications are pretty much in the bag if they have a relevant profile, still need to do their homework and make sure that vital skills like negotiating, coordinating, and getting details right are honed to perfection.



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