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Over 100 Pharmaceutical Execs Convene in Princeton to Discuss Collaborating to Build Quality into Clinical Trials

Third Annual Avoca Quality Consortium Summit Focuses on New Ways to Break Down Silos, Advance Technology, and Build Bridges to Patients during Clinical Trials

Princeton, NJ (June 3, 2014) – Top executives from across the pharmaceutical and Contract Research Organization (CRO) industries attended the Avoca Quality Consortium Summit on May 6 and 7 to discuss new opportunities for proactively building quality into clinical programs through collaboration. The concept of building quality into programs throughout the value chain from sponsors and CROs to investigative sites and patients was a key theme that emerged from the Summit. Keynote speaker Jamie Heywood, co-founder and chairman of PatientsLikeMe, highlighted the theme of collaborating with patients.

The Avoca Quality Consortium brings sponsor companies and CROs together to accelerate the development of best practices and industry standards for proactive quality management in outsourced clinical trials. One of the many facets of this quality focus includes aspects of building bridges to patients through various approaches to patient engagement and consideration of the patient experience in the clinical trial execution and design process.

The two-day Summit took place at the Westin in Princeton, NJ. The first day was exclusively for members of the Avoca Quality Consortium, and included the welcome of several new member companies, including Merck, Baxter, Novartis, Premier Research and TAKE Solutions. The day included a presentation on a new approach to pre-qualifying third-party organizations, as well as moderated discussions and group breakouts on topics such as annual consortium Member survey assessments, quality metrics, enhancing outcomes, and the potential benefits of "big data."

"By design, the first day of our Summit is a working session with our member executives and experts where we have a chance to present consortium initiatives and early concepts and then collect member input for future direction and refinement of the initiatives," said Steve Whittaker, Executive Director of the Avoca

Quality Consortium. "This year, we learned that members are truly eager for a transformational change in the way the pharma and CRO industries will advance progress through collaboration. They desire to see more patient engagement, more use of technology, and especially, more sharing of fundamental resources and best practices."

Day Two of the Summit was open to the entire industry, and focused on the opportunity to effectively bridge collaboration from sponsors and CROs through investigators and to patients. Emceed by Pete Taft, founder and CEO of the regulatory communications consultancy PharmApprove, the day included a micro-blogging crowdsourcing session, and a panel discussion on Quality by Design principles as applied to clinical trials.

Jamie Heywood's keynote address stressed the importance of getting feedback from patients within clinical trials, and treating them as partners rather than subjects.

"Ultimately, everything we do in the pharmaceutical industry links to the patient. We wanted the Summit to leave participants feeling inspired about the important role they play in building quality into clinical programs and building bridges to patients for solutions that benefit all stakeholders," said Patty Leuchten, CEO of The Avoca Group.

The final speaker was Steve Sashihara, President and CEO of Princeton Consultants, Inc., who gave an out-of-industry perspective on how the techniques of optimization can be beneficial for clinical trials.

This year's Summit was made possible thanks to Gold Sponsorship from ICON, Silver Sponsorship from Acurian, DrugDev, INC Research, and inVentiv Health Clinical and Media Partnership from CenterWatch.

About The Avoca Quality Consortium:
The Avoca Quality Consortium was founded in 2012 to bring Sponsors and CROs together to accelerate the development of best practices and industry standards for proactive quality management in clinical trials. The Avoca Quality Consortium is led by The Avoca Group, Inc., a Princeton-based consulting firm. Avoca's team consists of pharmaceutical industry veterans and subject matter experts in the areas of large-scale organizational change, relationship management, quality management, and survey research. For more information about the Avoca Quality Consortium please contact caryn.laermer@theavocagroup.com at (609) 799-0511, or visit the The Avoca Quality Consortium.

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