Thriving in the post-COVID-19 world—key areas of focus

At IQVIA Consumer Health we have identified seven key areas of focus that we believe can help consumer health businesses get into a position to succeed both in the short and long term.

6. Accelerate R&D delivery through tech, virtual and digital

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaken up R&D initiatives and accelerated new thinking around what will be the best way to innovate in the future.

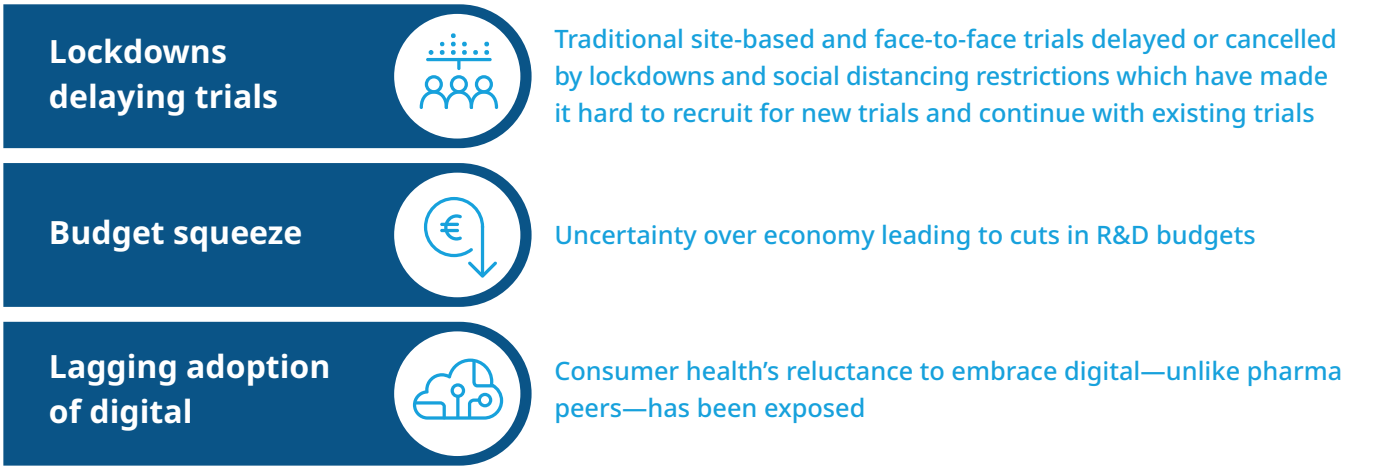
Restrictions on face-to-face contacts have made it difficult, if not impossible, to conduct clinical trials in the traditional way, with studies that required face-to-face interactions put on hold and new trials not started. Furthermore, the pandemic has made recruiting participants more challenging, and its impact on sales in certain categories have seen budgets cut or restricted (see Exhibit 1).

The COVID-19 crisis has exposed already existing problems more clearly—the need for new approaches to develop evidence for consumer health claims in a budget-friendly way and a more consumer-centric format.

It has exposed also how far behind consumer health is compared to its pharma counterpart, which has already moved beyond the standard randomized controlled trial (RCT), to utilize new digitally-driven methods, including utilizing digital technologies to establish virtual trials which can collect Real-World Evidence (RWE) from patient-reported outcomes (PROs) including symptoms, health-related quality of life (HRQOL), or patient perceived health status. RWE is now playing a crucial role in evaluating the value of health products.

As a consequence of these developments, standard medical research is changing and regulatory paradigms and guidelines are being updated at a global level. In a way, the evidence-based medicine hierarchy of evidence is redefined.

Exhibit 1: Enforced Shifts in How R&D is Carried Out[1]



HOW TO ADAPT TO THIS CHANGE:

The COVID-19 pandemic could be seen as a catalyst for consumer health companies to change development approaches, primarily thanks to rapid rise in virtual trial technology which enables companies to continue generating claims and innovation during the pandemic, while also providing a platform for the future once the pandemic is over and business adjusts to a new reality.

Virtual trials—already used widely in the pharma space—are now a workable option to overcome current challenges in R&D, while also enabling trials to be much more consumer-centric.

As many trials for consumer health products are based on questionnaires only, a virtual setting enables consumers to do this via digital tools completely from the comfort of their own homes. In the current situation, this enables trials to continue or to get started. This ability to run trials virtually also has the added benefit of being much more consumer-centric as outcomes are reported by consumers in a real-world context instead of at a doctor's office or a trial site.

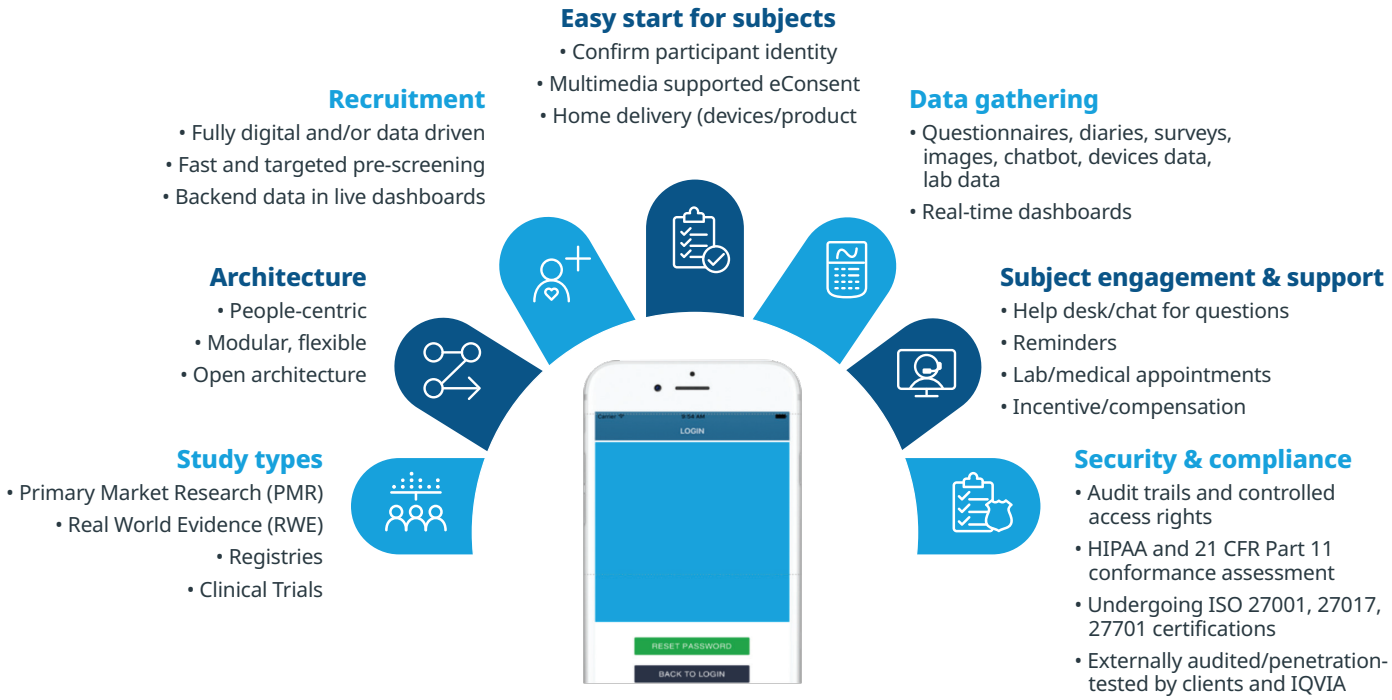
As Exhibit 2 shows, the physical tasks done during a site based clinical trial can be replaced by digital technologies, while consumers can do everything at home.

A consumer-friendly virtual platform can be adapted to specific study needs and enables the recruitment of participants via different types of social media resources to significantly accelerate the classic recruitment process and to ensure the right participants are enrolled.

These tools also allow pre-screening to find the right participants and provide full visibility on the progress of recruitment via a dashboard, down to the level of tracking products during shipment and photo documentation in the app to ensure arrival.

Consumer-reported outcomes can be gathered remotely, and adherence tracked through the virtual trial platform, while quality and compliance are ensured via audit trails and data security. These platforms also enable strict control of access rights to the system according to regulations, while users have access to a real-time dashboard to enable a live overview of the study.

Exhibit 2: Virtual "End-to-end" Methods Can Substitute for Site-based Approaches When Face-to-face Contact is Not Possible



Many of the current challenges can be managed by embracing digital technologies to support claim generation for three main reasons

1. The engagement level with consumers is much higher vs. standard approaches.
You will be able to capture consumer insights in real-time and the measurement of outcomes is done where the consumer feels at home. This leads to better adherence.

2. Companies can innovate in how they develop evidence for product value.
Evidence will be more consumer relevant as trials record consumer reported outcomes. And digital health tools enable the utilization of completely new endpoints, opening new avenues for claims development.

3. The execution of a virtual trial is a big advantage for all stakeholders.
Enrolment of participants can be done 3–4 times faster, and the costs are up to 50% lower, furthermore it enables research claim development to continue when face-to-face interactions are not possible.

Reference

1. IQVIA Consumer Health

CONTACT US
210 Pentonville Road | London N1 9JY | United Kingdom
consumer.health@iqvia.com
iqviaconsumerhealth.com