Evaluating a Medical Research Platform

A medical research platform enables your researchers and clinicians to easily find the most current, relevant and vetted information any time they search. When evaluating a research platform that satisfies your entire hospital’s needs a lot of questions and concerns pop up. Use this checklist to arrive at the best decision for your specific needs.

- **ANALYZE** your hospital’s current research strategy.
  
  Start a conversation with the heads of the department you support to understand their needs. Ask what is currently working and what they would change? This will help you learn what gaps need to be filled and how to build a more holistic medical research experience for your users.

- **UNDERSTAND** the ROI.
  
  Examine the return on your investments through the lens of cost and time. Evaluate your paid resources. What does usage look like for them? Which resources do your feel are impactful, but are perhaps being underutilized due to lack of exposure and visibility? The use of a medical research platform may bring these critical resources to light for your users and help increase usage. You’ll also want to investigate the aspect of time. How much time on average are your clinicians and researchers spending on a typical search for information? If users are finding the information they need quickly they are more likely to use your platform again and again.

- **LOOK** to include.
  
  Does your current research platform act more like a portal than a comprehensive research platform? Or would having a direct connection to the full text of journals, point-of-care resources and e-books within your platform make for a better experience? Look for ways to expand your current resources and create a seamless research experience.
THINK about where you came from and where you are going.

How important is it for you to have a tool that can evolve and flex with your hospital? Each hospital is different and for most a one-size-fits-all approach will not work. Think about where you came from when it comes to your information resources and research and where you believe your hospital will go in the future. Chances are you will need a platform that can be extensible and flexible down the road. Remember your existing platform may be working for you right now, but does it have the ability to evolve?

CALCULATE the cost.

Updating and adding to existing systems can create a tool that feels more “patch-work” than unified and complete. Map out your ideal research experience and estimate how much time, resources and money it would take to bring your existing platform to that level. You may find that purchasing a new and complete system is more cost effective.

CONSIDER information integration.

How much information and content will need to be integrated into a new platform? Creating a schedule and identifying transition milestones will be key to the success of launching a new platform and will save money. Working with a vendor who can assist and take the lead in some areas is a huge bonus to consider.

ASSESS usage history.

Hold a user group study internally to see how a clinician and a researcher utilize your current information resources to determine if they are engaging these resources to the best of their abilities. By understanding what works and doesn’t work for your end users you will have a better idea of the direction you want to head in for your new platform.

PLAN for training and roll-out.

You have enough work on your plate as it is. Creating a training schedule, promoting your new platform and training schedule and conducting trainings takes away from your focus. Working with a vendor who can help facilitate trainings and provide you with support to promote your new platform will help you get back to what you need to do.

LOOK to expand.

Leading subject indexes provide critical information for research. Utilizing a research platform that can connect content from top subject indexes to full-text resources allows researchers to connect with a depth of coverage they may never get anywhere else.