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Magnitude and characteristics of clinical trials in Saudi Arabia: A cross-sectional analysis

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The clinical trial is an important type of research design in the spectrum of translational research. The extent to which clinical trials are conducted is a reflection of the level of advancement that exists within a healthcare system – a single provider, an organization (e.g. a hospital), or a national healthcare system. This study aims at describing the clinical trial activity within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia since 2000 through reviewing those trials that have been registered with ClinicalTrials.gov in that time period. Since February 2000, 405 trials have been registered with ClinicalTrials.gov. These trials fall into one of 22 different ICD-10 codes, and with the top four being neoplasms (92), diseases of the circulatory system (57), endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases (46), and diseases of the respiratory system (25). Among the 405 trials, about half (200) were classified as trials with both safety and efficacy endpoints. Fifty-two percent were phase IV trials and 28% were phase III. About 64% were randomized, and with about equal numbers of those trials coming from industry (86) and university sponsors (85), and smaller numbers coming from hospitals (51) and other sponsors. Among the 185 university- or hospital-sponsored trials, the most common was a phase IV neoplasm trial (11) and next being a phase IV trial of diseases of the circulatory system (9). A total of 24 phase III university- or hospital-sponsored trials have been registered during the 15-year time period. With a population approaching 30 million and very large annual healthcare expenses, it would appear that the level of clinical trial activity within the Kingdom during the past 15 years has been rather paltry. The emphasis has been on post-marketing phase IV trials. The academic setting (i.e. universities and hospitals) has seen a new trial registered every 11 months on average. This study is solely based upon the information as registered in ClinicalTrials.gov. There is the possibility that other trials not registered could exist. However, it is thought that the resource would include those trials of a higher quality and more rigorous.

Biography

Sheraz Ali has completed his MPH degree on scholarship from University of Eastern Finland and PharmD from Baqai Medical University. He is currently working as a Researcher at Pharmaceutical Care Services, King Saud Medical City, Ministry of Health, Saudi Arabia, and involved in several clinical research projects. He also worked as a Clinical Research Associate in CRO and Pharmaceutical industry and is a part of local and international clinical trials. He is a registered researcher in Saudi Arabia and also a member of International Society for Disease Surveillance (ISDS).

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