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**KOL**



The Impact of Varied Definitions  
of 'KOLs' for Healthcare Research Recruitment

# The Dilemma

During a recent discussion with healthcare research industry colleagues, we concluded that the term 'KOL' is defined in so many different ways that it has effectively become a useless label. And yet the term does play an important role for recruitment in that it signals the need to identify someone special – at least based on that particular knowledge seeker's definition.

But this lack of a consistent definition can cause many problems. Some of the more troubling include:



Misunderstandings between the person attempting to identify and recruit the KOL and the knowledge seeker.



Misaligned expectations on the part of both the knowledge seeker and the KOL. For example, the KOL might be incapable of providing the level of knowledge anticipated by the knowledge seeker.



Inaccurate feasibility determination which can lead to project failure and/or associated budget issues.

## So, What's the Solution?

Because one knowledge seeker's KOL can be another knowledge seeker's rank and file physician, it is critical to understand how each knowledge seeker defines the KOL they seek. For some, a KOL is defined as a physician that is extensively published in the area of interest and/or they regularly speak at medical conferences on the topic. For others, the KOL needs to have been an investigator in a clinical trial or is frequently cited in peer articles. Sometimes, knowledge seekers define KOLs based solely on their prescribing volume for a particular drug or class of drugs or volume of patients they treat suffering from a particular condition. While treatment or prescribing volume isn't how most people define a KOL, it works for these clients.

**And that's the point – we need to forget about the label and let the unique needs of a particular knowledge seeker define what they are looking for in their KOL.**

So, before you attempt to execute a project involving 'KOLs', make certain you know who you are seeking and share your specific criteria with those that will be targeting and recruiting these physicians. Ultimately, this will result in the recruitment of higher caliber KOLs that can deeply focus on the topic of interest and provide you with a richer learning experience.

Brought to you by:



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