CASE STUDY

# A LIFE IN A DAY

# How a pharma company learned to optimise the clinical trial experience for patients, helping shift its R&D engine into top gear

## SUMMARY


- A client of A Life in a Day envisioned a new type of programme designed to optimise the patient experience during clinical trials
- 200 R&D staff signed up to take part in this pioneering experience within the first few months of launch
- 94% of participants said the experience would foster a more patient-centric approach and 93% noted that it had helped increase their empathy for patients participating in a trial
- Teams promised to make clinical trial participants' lives easier by reducing burden, and committed to amplify the patient voice in clinical trial design
- Reduced burden is leading to superior retention rates, richer data and reduced costs
- As a clinical trial sponsor, the client stands to benefit from optimal patient recruitment, retention and overall study outcomes for years to come

## SITUATION:

### Leaders spot an opportunity to capture novel patient insights

Sophie, head of learning and development for a multinational pharma company's R&D function, first learned about A Life in a Day by taking part in its asthma-focused immersive experience. The company had engaged with A Life in a Day several times, in therapy areas including cardiovascular, dermatology, infectious disease and respiratory.

Sophie was one of a growing number of leaders who had become internal champions for A Life in a Day. An exchange between Sophie and another champion, a senior R&D colleague, led the two to wonder about the applicability of A Life in a Day not just in specific disease areas but also in clinical development and operations more broadly.

They decided to engage with A Life in a Day in a new type of programme: one designed to build empathy for clinical trial participants, with the ultimate aim of optimising the patient experience.

## TASK:

### Help R&D colleagues immerse themselves in a clinical trial

Sophie had never doubted her R&D colleagues' ability to design and execute robust clinical trials that answer pertinent clinical and medical questions, as well as satisfying regulatory requirements.

Yet she suspected their knowledge of and appreciation for what a clinical trial actually looks and feels like from a patient's perspective was suboptimal, with potential false assumptions and blind spots they simply weren't aware of.

Sophie's task was to empower R&D and clinical teams to think outside the box of medical and scientific data, and to help them understand non-clinical aspects, in particular patient burden, to further optimise study design.

From a business perspective, the rationale for this initiative was clear. Sophie's employer is the sponsor of many hundreds of clinical studies running concurrently at any given time. So the company stood to benefit almost immediately by better retaining patients in its current studies.

In addition, augmenting R&D teams' knowledge base with insights into what it's like to go through a clinical trial promised to boost recruitment as well as retention for all future studies that followed.

## ACTION:

### Partner with A Life in a Day to pioneer a clinical trial offering in a core therapy area

Asthma is a key therapy area focus for the company, underpinning its decision to have over 2,000 of its workforce experience A Life in a Day's programme in that therapy area since 2021. It also made asthma a natural choice and foundation on which to pioneer a clinical trial offering in collaboration with the team at A Life in a Day.

The clinical trial setting would mean future participants in the simulation gaining an understanding not only of asthma-specific symptoms and challenges, but also how these are relevant in the context of a research study and its various touchpoints with patients.

Sophie was one of a small group who collaborated with A Life in a Day through the development process. Their input ensured the end product would both meet business needs and resonate with participants. As an example, the team provided an authentic informed consent form used in one of its asthma studies, making the consent part of the immersion as close as possible to the real thing.

Building on its already strong relationship with A Life in a Day, the company acted with decisiveness: making the asthma clinical trials experience available to 200 R&D staff who signed up within the first few months of its launch.

And close collaboration between the two organisations continued throughout this rollout phase. Sophie was keen to hear at first hand just how much non-clinical, patient-relevant insight that participants had acquired through the programme. So she joined most of the debriefing workshops where co-workers explained how they intended to make patient-focused changes to their own work practices.

## RESULTS:

### Empathy for patient burden plus business benefits

The immediately quantifiable impact of the programme was more than compelling. **All 200 participants agreed that A Life in a Day had helped them think about the issues facing patients in new ways.** 94% said that their experience would foster a more patient-centric approach and 93% noted that it had helped increase their empathy for patients participating in a trial. 98% of participants also agreed it had helped increase the patient focus in their work.

But even more useful to Sophie were the changes co-workers had committed to make on the back of their newfound understanding and sensitivities towards the clinical trial experience. These changes fell into two broad categories: promises to make clinical trial participants' lives easier by reducing burden, and commitments to amplify the patient voice in protocol design *(see Box 1)*.

***Box 1: Insight-driven commitments from participants***

WHEN WORKING ON CLINICAL TRIAL PROTOCOLS, I WILL TRY TO ADVOCATE FOR THE PATIENT POINT OF VIEW. IF POSSIBLE, [I] WILL SEE IF THERE IS A WAY TO REDUCE IN-PERSON VISITS AND SEE IF THERE ARE VISITS WHICH COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED REMOTELY OR LESS FREQUENT[LY]. ALSO CONSIDER PATIENT BURDEN IN EVERY BIOMARKER THAT WE PLAN.

GLOBAL SAFETY OFFICER

MY ROLE IS TO BRING THE PATIENT VOICE TO OUR (CLINICAL) DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES, AND AS SUCH, THINKING ABOUT THE PATIENT NEEDS, PREFERENCES AND REDUCTION OF BURDEN IS MY DAILY WORK. SINCE A LIFE IN A DAY, I HAVE BEEN MORE VOCAL ABOUT WHAT I DO TO BOTH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS, RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT PATIENT-FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT.

SOPHIE, PATIENT CENTERED OUTCOMES TEAM LEAD

In terms of burden reduction, participants vowed to scrutinise existing study protocols through a patient lens. They pledged to differentiate between essential data points and the nice-to-have, simplifying things by eliminating the latter. They also agreed to challenge well-entrenched but ultimately non-rigid approaches to data collection.

The numerous improvements that participants in ongoing studies may now see include: flexibility in the windows for patient-reported outcomes (PROs); less frequent data collection; implementation of technology solutions; and virtual/phone appointments replacing some in-person site visits.

The R&D leader who first envisioned the clinical trial idea with Sophie has clear views on how the business will benefit in the near term. Participants of the Clinical Trials experiences have spoken about the impact a low-burden patient experience can have on superior retention rates, better patient compliance with study-related requirements, and richer data (with fewer data gaps), all of which will boil down to reduced costs.

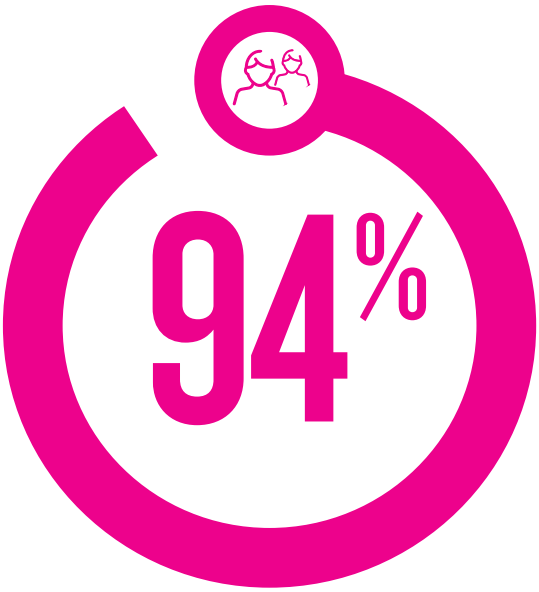
Meanwhile, measures to ensure future clinical trials truly capture the patient voice include commitments to address patient-important issues in study design, and a willingness to speak up about the patient experience in dialogues with health authorities. The expectation is that as a clinical trial sponsor, the company will enjoy better recruitment, retention and overall study outcomes in the months and years to come.

## WHAT NEXT?

**On the back of this success story, the asthma clinical trials experience is now available as an onboarding learning piece** for new R&D recruits within the company and for those promoted or transitioning internally into these functions.

The company has also expressed an interest in future work with A Life in a Day, exploring other opportunities for programme development across its numerous other strategic therapy areas.

Sophie's case study serves as an example of how a pharmaceutical R&D engine that's already running smoothly can achieve even more stellar results with the power of patient insights.

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