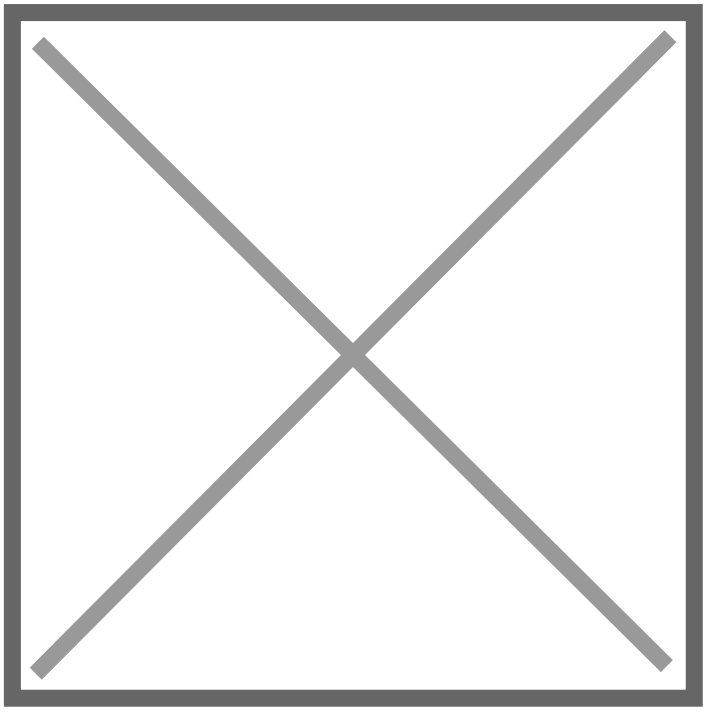
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"Trained manpower is the key for a CRO's success" - Esther Ninan, course co-ordinator, Academy for Clinical Excellence (ACE)

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What are the CROs looking for from ACE?
The clinical research industry is growing at a very rapid pace. This has resulted in many new CROs setting up their operations in India in a short span of time. Trained manpower is the key for any CRO to be successful in acquiring clinical trials. CROs require trained professionals to conduct quality clinical trial projects. ACE fulfils this requirement by providing trained manpower to them.

Are your programs tailor-made to meet the requirements of the industry?
We have two types of courses-certificate courses and diploma program.

Certificate courses are generally 2-3 day workshops on different topics related to clinical trials like protocol and CRF designing, advanced workshop on GCP, regulations in clinical research, ethics committee composition and sfunction and many more such topics. We also conduct in-house courses on these topics and tailor-make them to suit the requirement of the organization.

We also offer part-time post graduate diploma in clinical research. This is an eight-month diploma program with lectures on Sundays only. This program has six modules which have been prepared in a such a way that they cover different aspects of clinical trials like monitoring, data management, regulations, clinical trial management and GCP principles which help the students to choose their career options after completing the program.

How many students have completed the ACE programs so far?
More than 700 students have taken up our certificate courses till now. The first batch for our diploma program had 35 students, the second batch has 78 students and we have received over 200 enquiries as of date, for our third batch, which will commence in June.

Why are Indian universities not yet offering regular courses in clinical research/ data management?
Clinical research is still in its nascent stage in India. The universities have still not realized the importance of this industry and its underlying potential to create trained manpower for this industry. There is also a lack of communication between these educational bodies and industry personnel. Things will definitely change in the days to come.

What is the supply and demand ratio of trained personnel in the Indian CRO sector?
CenterWatch has predicted that by 2010, the industry will spend around $250-300 million on clinical trials in India. McKinsey estimates a much higher figure of $1-1.5 billion. This rapid acceleration of market will create huge challenges for medical manpower and healthcare infrastructure. The training focus of sponsors and CROs is on the investigators involved in their trials and their own monitors and other professionals. With the result, a small number of the trained investigators and monitors are retrained and large numbers of untrained physicians and students seeking a career in clinical research remain unexposed

to research training. Unless there are research training institutes which can churn out trained professionals, this huge gap in the demand and supply of trained personnel cannot be bridged. ACE is trying to bridge the gap by developing e-learning solutions, so that we can reach out to a larger number of aspiring candidates who wish to make a career in this field.

Is there a need for more institutes like yours to train people for the sector?

Yes, more institutes are required to train aspiring students wanting to make a career in this sector. However, these institutes should not operate with the main objective of earning huge profits but should have a focused approach of imparting training in this new field making it affordable to deserving candidates.

Narayan Kulkarni