

CVS has a new clinical trial business, and it won't have trouble recruiting participants

Article

CVS Health [launched](#) a new clinical trials business, Clinical Trial Services, which will deliver research solutions to drug developers and contract research organizations (CROs).

- Using its nationwide retail footprint it plans to: reach more eligible participants, administer study-related tests (both at-home, virtually, or at a CVS location), and drive diversity in recruitment to make sure trials are more reflective of real-world populations.

This news isn't surprising—CVS already has inroads in the clinical trial space:

- **CVS played a major role in bolstering COVID-19 clinical trials in the US.** It worked with five Operation Warp Speed clinical trial sponsors and other industry partners to quickly recruit a diverse pool of COVID-19 clinical trial participants using its data-driven digital models and screening protocols.
- **And CVS has leaned on its specialty infusion services and enteral nutrition business arm Coram to help decentralize clinical trials in the past.** For context, infusion services involve delivering drug treatments intravenously—examples include chemotherapy, pain management, and antibiotic treatments. Coram made tailored solutions for drugmakers and CRO customers using home care and project management services to optimize their clinical trials by administering study-related procedures in patients' homes: For example, for one study, Coram achieved a patient retention rate close to **90%**—well over the 70% average rate.
- **Even back in 2019, CVS initiated its own clinical trial to study its Hemocare Hemodialysis System.** The trial was designed to prove the safety and viability of CVS' at-home hemodialysis device, which would let patients get regular treatment for kidney disease without the need for frequent in-person visits.

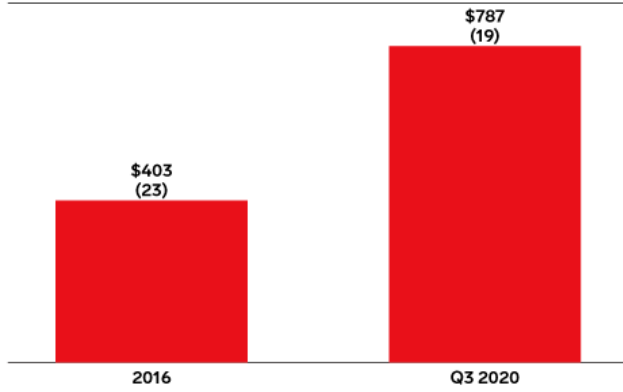
While major players like Current Health and Komodo Health are knee-deep in the clinical trials space, CVS has the cards stacked in its favor—it has businesses across the entire pharma supply chain it can lean on for recruitment.

- **Clinical trials are key in proving the safety and efficacy of new drugs—but participant recruitment and retention prevent many of them from finishing successfully.** For example, 80% of studies don't meet participant enrollment deadlines, and around **30%** of participants drop out before a study is completed due to reasons ranging from inconvenient site location, complex participation requirements, and trial duration.
- **CVS is uniquely positioned to boost clinical trial recruitment and retention by leaning into its massive customer base across its pharmacy benefit manager, retail pharmacies, and insurance business.** CVS already has massive troves of patient data to find and capture eligible clinical trial patients: For example, **CVS Pharmacy** stores serve 4.5 million patients daily, and **Aetna** serves around 40 million members. To add, over 75% of people in the US live

within 3 miles of a CVS store, which it can lean on to boost the accessibility of clinical trials: **38%** of patients who dropped out of a trial said site visits were stressful, citing inconvenient location and schedule conflicts as top reasons for dropping out.

US Venture Funding for Clinical Trial Digital Health Solutions, 2016 & Q3 2020

millions and number of deals



Note: only includes US deals >\$2M; data comes from Rock Health's funding database
Source: Rock Health as cited in company blog, Nov 23, 2020

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