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ICON, IBM partner to optimize clinical trial outcome

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ICON, IBM partner to optimize clinical trial process



Singapore: Clinical research organization, ICON, has collaborated with IBM to help reduce the time and costs of drug development, while also offering patients enhanced quality of care by connecting them to relevant clinical trials.

ICON will tap Watson's cognitive computing power to help automate the cumbersome process of identifying patients who meet the criteria for a clinical trial, and to analyse protocols to assess trial feasibility and identify optimal trial sites.

Watson is a computing system that delivers through the cloud, analyzes high volumes of data, understands complex questions posed in natural language, and proposes evidence-based answers.

Initially, ICON is applying Watson Clinical Trial Matching to its breast, lung, colon and rectal cancer trials. The solution enables ICON to advise sponsors how many patients match their trial criteria, where they are located and how they will recruit them. IBM's Watson Health Cloud will facilitate access to de-identified patient data, including 50 million patient records contained in the data set from Explorys, which IBM acquired in April. At the same time, ICON enhances IBM Watson's capabilities by providing expertise into clinical trial protocols and clinical operations.

The cost and time involved in clinical trials is considerable. More than USD1.3 billion is spent on patient recruitment by drug developers each year and yet fewer than 5 percent of cancer patients participate in a clinical trial. It also typically takes 6-12 months to start up a global phase III drug trial and another 12 months to enroll the required number of patients.

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Commenting on the announcement, Dr Steve Cutler, chief operating officer, ICON said, "Recruiting the required number of patients for clinical trials is a constant challenge for our customers and can represent more than 30 percent of total study costs. By applying IBM Watson to our clinical trials, we have the potential to revolutionise clinical trial feasibility, patient recruitment and study start-up timelines which will help our customers take significant time and cost from their development programmes. Together with IBM, we are also providing a better and faster way to connect patients with clinical trials that are

most relevant to them. Today's announcement is an excellent example of disruptive innovation and represents ICON and IBM's shared vision for using industry-leading technologies and real-word data sets to improve clinical development."

"Clinical trials are crucial in the drug and treatment development process, but when it comes to identifying appropriate trial candidates, there are significant data challenges, which can contribute to delays for bringing new therapies to market," said Sean Hogan, vice president and general manager, IBM Healthcare. "Through cognitive computing and cloud-based data, our goal is to help our clients accelerate the time it takes to complete clinical trials and reach conclusive trial results."

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