

"SAS Visual Analytics enables us to rapidly identify trends in clinical trials as they unfold."

Nadina Grosios

Director of Consultancy,
SMS-oncology

CUSTOMER STORY



SMS-oncology stands out from the crowd

Powerful analytics from SAS enable SMS-oncology to give biotech clients rich insight into ongoing clinical trials, enabling proactive intervention



Challenge

SMS-oncology aims to grow and become Europe's leading oncology clinical research organization. What value-adding services could the company offer to better serve its clients and boost its appeal?

As healthcare regulations tighten across the globe, the size, complexity, duration and cost of clinical trials are climbing. The trend shows no sign of stopping, and many pharmaceutical companies are choosing to outsource trials of new drugs to contract research organisations (CROs). This development has sparked a boom in the CRO industry, causing the global market to grow from around USD 14.9 billion in 2014 to USD 25 billion in 2018.

As demand continues to soar, CROs are vying to capture a larger slice of the thriving market. To succeed, they must find a way to stand out from the pack. Facing this challenge, SMS-oncology – a CRO based in Amsterdam that specialises in oncology (the study and treatment of cancer) – set out to find a source of competitive differentiation.

Nadina Grosios, Director of Consultancy at SMS-oncology, takes up the story: "Many of our clients are start-ups undertaking their first clinical trials of new drugs in humans. Because we have years of experience in oncology trials, we are well-positioned to support them on their journey to market via consultancy and clinical operation services. For example, we help clients study clinical data from trials and identify their target tumour indication, advise what else they need to get their drugs into the clinic, help them to meet regulatory requirements, and inform them about competition in their relevant market segment. Running clinical trials remains our core business however, and here is where data analysis and understanding is most critical."

Always seeking to deliver better value to its clients, SMS-oncology recently identified an opportunity to improve its offering: namely, helping clients to reach a deeper understanding of the results of their clinical trials.

Nadina Grosios explains: "Traditionally, clinical data from trials is presented in huge tables of numbers spanning hundreds or even thousands of pages. Obtaining meaningful insight from this sea of data is hard work, requiring hours of scrutiny and analysis in spreadsheets. We set out to find a better way of working."

Finding the cure

SMS-oncology decided to deploy SAS® Visual Analytics, and engaged SAS partner OCS Consulting for support during the implementation.

"We looked at several leading analytics packages, and three key factors swayed the decision in favour of SAS," recalls Nadina Grosios. "First, SAS demonstrated a strong



Solution

SAS® Office Analytics for
Midsize Business

SAS® Visual Analytics

Benefits

- More than doubles the speed for analysis of clinical data
- Unlocks insight into ongoing clinical trials, enabling proactive intervention
- Delivers tangible value-add to clients, helping SMS-oncology to deliver better services

track record of implementations in the life-sciences segment, so we knew that the software would be suitable for analysing clinical data. Second, the proposal offered good value for money. Finally, we knew we could count on excellent local support from our long-term partner OCS Consulting.”

Digging deep to unearth golden insight

As clinical trials progress, SMS-oncology captures data in SAS Office Analytics for Midsize Business software and imports it into SAS Visual Analytics. SAS Visual Analytics enables SMS-oncology to perform a vast range of analyses on the data and generate eye-catching visualisations. Critically, SAS makes it much easier for SMS-oncology to analyse data from clinical trials that are still ongoing, rather than generating reports only after a trial is completed.

“SAS Visual Analytics enables us to rapidly identify trends in clinical trials as they unfold,” explains Nadina Grosios. “For example, our medical monitoring personnel can work much more accurately and productively, because they can easily detect any clinical abnormalities recorded in patients’ data that require further investigation. Similarly, we can easily follow any assessments performed on an ongoing basis, including whether patients’ tumours are responding to the drug being tested. We can study the data across multiple dimensions at once and drill down to examine the findings at an extremely granular level. Using spreadsheets, it would take several days to reach those kind of conclusions, whereas with SAS Visual Analytics we can unearth that depth of insight in half the time.

“SAS Visual Analytics makes it much easier for us to surface results of statistical significance. In the simplest example, blood-cell counts outside the normal range are automatically highlighted as red dots, so we immediately know which patients we need to focus on. Those kinds of insights are much harder to find when they are hidden in thousands of rows of data.”

SMS-oncology is currently working on creating dynamic profiles of individual patients to give to clients. For example, at any given time during the trial, a client would be able to see in a single chart when a patient entered the trial, when they received the medication, what dosage they were given, what adverse events occurred and how they were managed, and most importantly what effect the drug had on the tumour. Compelling data visualisations from SAS Visual Analytics will make it much easier for SMS-oncology and its clients to understand the patient’s journey.

Nadina Grosios concludes: “At SMS-oncology our mission is to contribute to the development of innovative cancer therapies that will benefit patients and their families. We can only achieve this goal by offering a most comprehensive, insightful and value-adding service to our clients. SAS Visual Analytics enables us to offer such a service, and the feedback we have received from clients has been overwhelmingly positive. We are confident that SAS will support us in fulfilling our mission.”



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