



What is ACRO?

The Association of Clinical Research Organizations (ACRO) is the professional organization of companies whose focus is clinical research. The Association provides an active voice for the Clinical Research Organization (CRO) industry, which provides specialized services that are integral to the development of drugs, biologics and medical devices. ACRO helps its members improve the quality, efficiency and safety of biomedical research.

The Association represents the CRO industry to customers, regulators, legislators and the public with a unified presence and voice, and promotes the use of clinical outsourcing in medical product development by educating stakeholders on its cost-effectiveness and efficiency. In addition, ACRO seeks to foster an environment in which laws, regulations and public policies benefit its member companies, their customers and, most important, the patients who may live longer and better lives as a result of the development of new treatments.

What role do CROs play in the drug development process?

The principal role of CROs in the drug development process is the management of clinical trials, which account for 40 percent of the cost of developing new medical products. CROs ensure that trials are run as designed in the sponsoring company's protocol by managing the selection of trial participants, ensuring the data collected is accurate and continuously monitoring the doctors and patients enrolled in the effort.

Drug development is a time-consuming process, and 80 percent of the compounds that enter the trial phase never become approved drugs. Managing the trial process requires a large infrastructure and in-depth therapeutic expertise, and most pharmaceutical companies have chosen to outsource this function rather than continually add and cut staff to match the size of their development pipeline. In this way, they are free to concentrate on their core strengths: the basic research that leads to the discovery of new compounds, the ability to manufacture products that meet international regulatory guidelines, and the skill to market pharmaceutical products, biologics and medical devices.





Who can join ACRO?

Membership in ACRO is open to any company whose core business is clinical research. Regular Member companies support the Association's activities and initiatives on behalf of the industry through participation on the ACRO Board of Directors. Companies that join as Associate Members elect one member to ACRO's board and are active in a wide variety of Association initiatives.

Is ACRO only for large CROs with global outreach?

Definitely not. ACRO seeks to foster a positive environment for all CROs – large and small. The Association works to advance knowledge of the essential resources and expertise that its members bring to the development of new medical products among client companies, government agencies and the public. ACRO also works to increase the percentage of clinical development that is outsourced to CROs. It advocates for laws, regulations and public policies that support everyone who participates in – and benefits from – clinical research, including the most important group of all: patients.

How do companies benefit from joining ACRO?

As well as the prospect of representation on a number of Association committees, ACRO offers all kinds of other important benefits for member companies.

Opportunities for cross-industry networking, for example. A platform for members to come together and develop strategies for promoting industry. The setting and maintenance of business and ethical standards, and best practices. And last but not least, an invaluable chance to interact with regulators, peer associations and other allied bodies and institutions.

Most importantly, ACRO allows for the industry to come together and act and speak in a unified voice on crucial issues and future developments.

ACRO has established channels for discussion with regulators at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA). The Association also maintains collegial working relationships with organizations that represent related industries, such as the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA), the Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO), Clinical Data Interchange Standards Consortium (CDISC), the Association of Clinical Research Professionals (ACRP), and the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC). It also represents CROs before committees of Congress.



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What are some of ACRO's key achievements?

ACRO has built a reputation as an expert resource regarding drug development issues, as well as establishing an ongoing dialogue with policymakers whose decisions affect our industry. The Association continues to promote the CRO industry by participating in important healthcare-related trade shows and events; reaching out to key members of governments, regulatory agencies, and media; and providing important information through our Web site and other communications.

As a result of strong fiscal management, the Association has also been able to invest in important research studies that will help determine and quantify the advantages of clinical outsourcing.

In 2005, ACRO expanded its outreach to customers and policymakers. The Association commissioned a study of the outsourcing marketplace by the Tufts Center for the Study of Drug Development. The study was published in 2006, and several presentations of its results were well-received. As a key stakeholder, ACRO has been an active participant in the FDA's Critical Path initiative, which is aimed at streamlining of the regulatory process and development of "standardized" clinical trial data collection tools. This effort has led to ongoing partnerships with the FDA, the Clinical Data Interchange Standards Consortium (CDISC), the Drug Information Association (DIA) and customers. ACRO also represents the CRO industry on a committee of EMEA regulators and trial sponsors that is charged with implementing the European Clinical Trials Directive.

