goBalto™

tracker 2.0

the smarter, faster way to start

your clinical trial on the web

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MSA Partners

Connecting Teams in the Cloud for Faster Clinical Study

Jae Chung, Founder and CEO, goBalto Inc.

Please describe the background to the establishment of goBalto.

Chung: The company was founded in late 2008. Prior to goBalto, I co-founded a company in Korea called Celltrion, which is now listed on the KOSDAQ and is one of the country's largest contract manufacturers. That was my exposure to life sciences, and it really dawned on me how poor a lot of the clinical enterprise solutions were in terms of usability and their ability to tackle key problems related to the execution, conduct, and startup of clinical trials.

Headquartered in San Francisco, goBalto develops cloud-based solutions that simplify how clinical trials are started. We spoke with Mr. Jae Chung, the company's founder and CEO, about goBalto's Tracker 2.0 solution and the clinical study startup process.

Please describe how the Tracker 2.0 platform works in simplifying the startup process.

Chung: When qualifying principal investigators and sites for a clinical trial, pharmaceutical sponsors and their CROs have to go through a multi step process of diligence, which includes the collection of regulatory documentation, licenses, CVs, forms, and so forth. This process today is very manual and cumbersome. A large pharmaceutical company may be running 200 or 300 studies a year and working with tens of thousands of principal investigators. The way pharma, biotech, and medical device companies track activities and the collection of all these different documents is primarily through Excel spreadsheets. You can imagine, with teams spread out across the world, that trying to track these activities through spreadsheets can be cumbersome because they're error prone and manual.

Tracker 2.0 is a cloud based solution that connects the pharmaceutical sponsor, the CRO, and all of the sites in a clinical trial, and, using alerts, notifies everyone exactly what they need to do and what the next steps are. It reduces administrative overhead associated with tracking documents, and, for the first time, enables everybody to be on the same page and drive the process forward.

Why have companies been using Excel spreadsheets for these tasks?

Chung: When getting sites up and running around the world, every country has its own regulatory process and steps required before a site can start recruiting patients. There's quite a bit of variability in terms of how you map out these different processes. Spreadsheets, despite being manual and cumbersome, are very flexible in terms of the ability to input whatever field you want to describe all the steps. With Tracker 2,0, we've developed what's essentially a workflow engine capable of mapping out and reflecting the variability in a highly intuitive manner. Having an intuitive user interface is a very big part of our value proposition.

How many clinical trials has Tracker 2.0 supported so far?

Chung: To date, we've initiated or in the process of starting 26. We just released Tracker 2.0 last July. We've been working primarily with INC Research, which is a top five CRO and a strategic partner. It's just in the past few months that we've started opening it up to other large pharmaceutical companies.

If a CRO signs up, do its pharma sponsor clients also use it?

Chung: Our primary client base is pharma, biotech, and medical device companies and CROs. Sites also use the solution, but they don't pay for it. If a CRO signs on, they typically grant access to their sponsor in terms of certain reports and status updates that the sponsor would like to receive in terms of CRO oversight. It's really a tool to provide transparency and visibility to their sponsor client.

It's really only in the past few years or so that people in the industry have started realizing that the startup phase is really a choke point in terms of getting clinical trials completed faster. They've started acknowledging the problem and set up dedicated study startup teams because they finally realize that, the more time wasted when getting sites up and running, the less time they have to recruit patients. If you think of what's involved, on a day-to-day basis, in getting these sites activated, there's a tremendous amount of effort expended on the phone and with email, calling sites, letting your study team members know, and letting your sponsors know exactly where they are and how they're progressing. It can take two days to generate reports in Excel. With Tracker 2.0, you can do that in real-time instantaneously. Still, getting people off their spreadsheets is not always easy. People are used to spreadsheets. People love their emails.

What kind of feedback have you received from INC Research on Tracker 2.0? Where are they seeing the greatest benefits in their work?

Chung: First off, they were one of the earliest believers in our approach of leveraging a cloud-based collaborative platform to accelerate clinical study startup . Usability is also where we have received praise. Of course, every solutions provider thinks the usability of its solutions is great, but we track it using the net promoter score (NPS), where you can actually measure the willingness of people to recommend our solution to other third parties. We're tracking over 80 percent for recommendations among early adopters.

Another source of value, as I mentioned, is reducing the administrative overhead. There are all kinds of time and efficiency savings that we generate by offering a solution where everybody can get the singular view of overall status and the entire team is in sync. Lastly, for all global pharma companies, whether they're headquartered in the Asia Pacific region or elsewhere, people in the headquarters need to collaborate very closely with counterparts in the US, EU, and other parts of Asia. Tracker 2.0 is a tool that helps tie together disparate teams spread around the world, and enables them to collaborate more closely. That's been one of the key points of feedback in terms of where they see the value proposition.

profile_ Jae Chung

Prior to founding goBalto, Mr. Chung co-founded Celltrion, a leading biopharmaceutical manufacturing company, and was a strategy consultant with McKinsey & Company. A self-described "geek" and Apple fanboy, he established goBalto to introduce elegant, easy-to-use web-based applications for life science organizations. In 2013, goBalto was a Red-Herring 100 Finalist. Jae was recognized as a FierceBiotechIT Top-10 Techie, and in 2010 was awarded the Bio-IT World Judges Prize for Technology Innovation. He has an MBA from New York University and holds a CPA. A startup evangelist, he works with Rock Health to mentor healthcare technology startups.