



Media Release

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National coordination of clinical trials needed to build post COVID-19 sector

A leading group of Contract Research Organisations (CROs) under the leadership of ARCS Australia are calling on the federal government to improve policies and processes around national coordination of clinical trials in Australia. In the position statement released today, 15 leading Australian CROs are advocating that:

1. Australia remains open for establishing new clinical trials and supporting ongoing clinical trials, which save lives, improves the health and quality of life of participants.
2. Embedding key virtual processes and decentralised trials is essential to improve the conduct of clinical trials in Australia.
3. Eliminating redundancy to improve start-up times and competitiveness internationally.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a transformational disruption for all aspects of society, including the healthcare sector. The clinical trials sector has adapted quickly to ensure the successful continuation and management of clinical trials during the acute phase of the pandemic.

Dr Daniela Caiazza, Chair of the CRO steering committee and Director Clinical Operations ANZ at Novotech, said: "Australia is in a unique position to capture new business and continue to build the sector, so we are calling for a national approach to tackle some of the challenges through the current COVID-19 crisis and beyond."

Dr Shanny Dyer, CEO of ARCS Australia, stated: "The position statement sets out what needs to be done to remove the most significant barriers to how clinical trials are delivered in Australia."

"ARCS Australia has supported the CRO sector by providing a platform for open and frank dialogue to identify common issues. ARCS will continue to provide high quality accredited training on international standards and GCP as well as specific training on all aspects of conducting clinical trials," concluded Dr Dyer.

Benefit of clinical trials to:

Healthcare

Clinical trials remain critical to delivering innovative drugs, vaccines, medical devices and diagnostics, and therapies to Australian consumers and patients in a safe and regulated manner. Given the predicted impact of COVID-19 on the health system and services, CROs and others in the sector are working with doctors, research nurses and clinical trial sites to address disruption of normal research activities.

Participants

Trial participants gain early access to innovative new medicines and therapeutic goods. Clinical trials help improve the standard of care through the uptake of evidence into practice. At all times, the safety and continuity of care of clinical trial participants is the key concern of all professionals working with patients.

Economy

Clinical trials are also an important contributor to the Australian economy contributing to the GDP, attracting overseas investment, and supporting skills development and retention. The international clinical trials sector is predicted to grow significantly over the next decade and it is important for Australia to have policies and systems in place to capitalise on this growth.

Who are CROs?

In Australia, CROs play a critical role in delivering clinical trials for both sponsored and investigator led trials. There are currently 20 companies operating in Australia offering resources, capability and capacity to deliver trials from First-In-Human (Phase 1) through to post-marketing surveillance (Phase 4). CROs are committed to the delivery of clinical research and ensuring that the clinical trials already underway are managed as well as can be during the pandemic. CROs are working closely with clinical trial centre staff to understand what additional support can be provided to overcome the challenges presented by COVID-19 disruptions.

ARCS Australia Ltd is a national, membership-based organisation focused on the development and growth of the healthcare sector. ARCS provides education, career pathways, professional development and advocacy to the healthcare sector.

For more information and to arrange an interview with Dr Shanny Dyer please contact Marion Demann, Director Marketing & Communications, ARCS on 0416 625 678 or mdemann@arcs.com.au