



**A conversation with the Conference Chair  
Peter Colbourne, ConcentRx Consulting**



**You've done extensive research with the industry in terms of Logistics standardization, tell us about that work.**

**Peter:** Sure. There are many processes in clinical research which are vulnerable if logistics fail. Any of these failures can result in a project delay, lost materials, wasted resources and time, and potentially can lead to a project failure. The role of the logistics task force is to work with all of the logistics stakeholders, to clearly identify and define the areas which are pressure points and demonstrate that there are valid business cases to be made for addressing these issues, on both sides.

In February 2009, we created the [Clinical Trial Logistics group on LinkedIn](#) and we opened discussions to gain insight into what is happening in the clinical trial logistics arena. Since that time, we have identified a variety of stakeholders in various functional groups who are well-positioned to provide valuable insights to the task force. Also, we have been conducting a survey of the various industry leaders who to better understand their impressions of the current service providers, areas of exploration, and opportunities to improve efficiencies and reducing costs. That is really the target of the Logistics Task Force. It is to open up the discussion to all the stake holders, not just a select few. There are issues that are across the board, small companies, large companies and regions across the world, and this is exactly what the sponsors are trying to accomplish in their trial.

**This year you are spearheading our Logistics Task force meeting. Give us a preview of what to expect from this meeting and why it's so crucial that professionals attend this summit, what makes it so unique?**

**Peter:** I've been attending these events for over 10 years now, and it seems to me that, when I talk to my colleagues, we really need to change the paradigm a little bit as to how these discussions unfold. What you will see is that this year's Central Labs West event, the clinical trials task force is really focusing on a specific issue, which is the transportation logistics. We will also be examining the changing rules of specialty couriers and the services which are required in order to support clinical research activity. Both in the short term, looking at the projects that are about to unfold and the long term, what we see happening in the global market place for clinical trials and logistic services. Our approach is unique. If we cannot demonstrate a sound business case for change, we should not expect a change to occur. We've got to be able to make the case that there is a reason why the vendors who are involved in the projects need to improve efficiencies, extend their service capabilities and control what happens in their supply chain. So what we are actually facing here is the challenge, the difficulty in rationalization. How do we bring all of the parties on board and provide a viable business case that covers the bulk? It's really the 80/20 rule. Where can we address the needs today that can address the needs of 80% of the market place? And we will look at what we need to add on for the additional 20%. Only those who really speak up are heard. This is an opportunity for the attendees to gain insights into what the issues are that are affecting their peers and be able to contribute during this special session as well as the clinical trial logistics group on LinkedIn, as well as participating in future sessions of the logistics task force. Some of the ideas for future sessions will focus on logistics issues such as packaging and validation, temperature control, regulatory issues and their impact on logistics, the evolution of information technology to support logistics globally. We'll also be providing all of the LinkedIn members and our attendees updates on some of the previous sessions. We'll update them on the action items, where do the action items stand, what discussions have we had, what are the new services, how have the services evolved from the various vendors. People will have an opportunity to keep continuity, and it won't be a simple event where we sit down with someone for an hour and walk away. We're going to maintain a level of control so that people

understand that there are changes happening and that we have done a good job of making the business case.

**If you could give one piece of Logistics advice, what would it be?**

**Peter:** I think everybody knows this. Nothing can happen in a vacuum. It's important to solicit information and ideas from a variety of sources, which includes vendors and peers. One mechanism people use is to get peer recommendations so they reach out directly. In this age of information technology, it is really important that people understand that forums are available that can help things move forward very quickly. One of these forums is the Clinical Trial Logistics group on LinkedIn. This in turn can help others who may be, and likely are, encountering similar issues. I can give you an example. On the Clinical Trial Logistics group, nineteen days ago, we had a request from one of our members to gain some information and insights about various CTMS Platforms. Eighteen days ago, we received another message from someone who was looking for a similar solution. Seventeen days ago, we had information from another one of our members saying we should look at a particular solution in this particular case. Seventeen days ago, we reached out to that company; they joined the Clinical Trial Logistics group, and now they are communicating with both of those members. They are also updating their vendor services profile in our sub-group so that people who come to our group so that they can see that something has been done, there have been discussions, and there is a solution there. So it's not a one-stop shop, but it's a great way for people to communicate with each other very quickly. In this case, in the span of two days, people were able to gain insights into potential solutions, have discussion with potential suppliers, and share that information with the entire group.

I also suggest that sponsors build strategic relationships with their lab partners and vendors early. It is really important that they bring in this expertise. The labs are working all over the world. They have an understanding for what is required to get things through customs, working with their logistics providers, being able to understand the nuances of the trial, the materials that are being work with, and better prepare the sponsors for what's actually going to be required during the trial. They can help establish role-out timelines, have best practices, and if the sponsor

decides to work in-country, they can have a better sense of what will be required in order to move that project forward.

**What else would you like to share?**

**Peter:** First of all, I want to thank IIR for being such a strong supporter of the logistics task force. The level of interest we've received has been incredible. People should attend this event, if for no other reason, than to see our model for open and ongoing discussion. We are looking forward to feedback and discussions and people's interest and participation in the same way that CNN uses ireporters. If you're in the trenches, we want to hear from you. Any input you have to offer would be welcome. We're screening our group. We are only looking at people who are involved in clinical trial logistics. Right now, there are over 195 people in our group and I think that everybody would be pleasantly surprised by how we're structuring this meeting, and the opportunities for feedback after the event.