

Ellipses Pharma

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Ellipses Pharma: maximizing KOL input to increase the success rate of oncology R&D

Ellipses Pharma's KOL-enabled cloud-based platform is crowdsourcing expert insight from oncologists worldwide to create tailored opportunities for developing drug candidates.

Key opinion leader (KOL) input is associated with a higher success rate in drug development. However, many oncology programs fail to effectively use this critical resource, resulting in poor decision making, unnecessary delays in development, and conflicts that bias asset selection and clinical trial design. Ellipses Pharma is taking a different approach.

Ellipses, a developer of innovative cancer medicines, has built a cloud-based platform to crowdsource scientific and clinical insight from a large number of global oncology KOLs—200 and climbing—in its scientific affairs group (SAG). Because the KOLs provide responses anonymously, and the data are blinded when reviewed internally, the platform guards against groupthink, enables open expression of views, and mitigates the risk that Ellipses will value some opinions more highly than others.

The large number of KOLs offering expert critique and input increases confidence in the feedback and allows Ellipses to capture heterodox views—outliers that challenge assumptions and lead to better decisions. KOLs are located in leading centers of excellence around the world and provide expert reviews of the pre-clinical and clinical data for each asset alongside insights into local practices, patient populations, and real-world evidence of the competitive landscape.

How Ellipses uses the platform

Ellipses uses the platform in its due-diligence process before it in-licenses new assets (Fig. 1). By gathering feedback from around 50 to 70 experts simultaneously on each asset, Ellipses' investment team utilizes the scientific consensus to de-risk the development of its drugs by better understanding data on potential acquisition targets, the indications a drug candidate could address, and how important a molecule could be for patients.

The feedback can reveal new and tailored opportunities for drug candidates, for example by showing that Ellipses' new RET receptor tyrosine kinase inhibitor (EPO031) has applications in cancers that mutate and escape existing treatments, as well as in tumors that are RET positive when first detected. Such input enables Ellipses to understand and maximize the value of assets by allowing the design and execution of more efficient clinical trials with enhanced success rates.

After acquiring an asset, Ellipses gathers continual input from the KOLs to enable the nimble adaptation of drug development in response to new internal and external data. The experts comment on clinical trial design, patient stratification, biomarker selection, and how to increase the chances of success. The

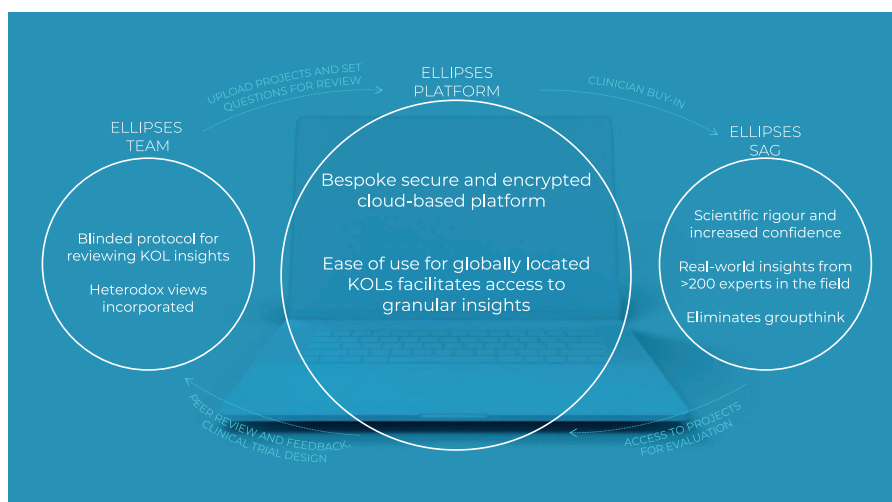


Fig. 1 | Capabilities of the Ellipses platform. The secure anonymized online asset-review process for ellipses key opinion leaders (KOLs) promotes freedom to express opinions and an unbiased appraisal of the clinical data. SAG, scientific affairs group.

input has enabled Ellipses to open studies and enroll participants faster than industry norms.

Ellipses' constant engagement with KOLs facilitates flexibility. Recently, Ellipses responded to feedback from its KOLs after requesting a review of the development plan for one of its drugs in the clinic. KOLs provided real-world data, garnered in recent months in their clinics and presented at a leading cancer conference, to argue against focusing on development of a triplet combination. Noting the toxicity profile of the currently used combination, the KOLs made the case for prioritizing a doublet that would likely be better for patients, be more attractive to investigators and physicians, and provide more relevant data to inform the design of any successful triplet combination needed in the future. Ellipses responded by running preclinical doublet studies and pivoting to the new approach.

Validating the KOL-enabled model

KOLs have embraced the model. The platform is easy to use, with a professor at Newcastle University and University Hospitals, UK, praising the ability to "evaluate in stages" and complete work in their "own time, when more convenient." KOLs value participation. A professor at Cambridge University, UK, described their role as "fulfilling academically and altruistically," while a peer at University Hospitals Leuven, Belgium, said it would be "a missed opportunity not to work with Ellipses." A professor of investigational cancer therapeutics, University of

Texas, USA explained "Being part of the SAG allows me to make an impact in an even earlier stage of an asset, when the investment decisions are made."

Ellipses has early evidence that its KOL-enabled approach is working. Seven of the nine assets chosen and developed thus far with the input of the experts remain in active development, putting the company above the historical one-in-eight success rate seen in oncology drug development. If Ellipses can increase the success rate to one in seven or one in six, it will mean more approved therapies for patients, lower drug development costs, and ultimately better value for payers.

Work is underway to further improve the system, with Ellipses aiming to increase the membership of its SAG to 300 oncology KOLs split between Europe, the US, the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region, and the rest of the world while making its platform even easier to use. The improvements will position Ellipses to continue to use KOL input to inform a disruptive approach to drug development that is designed to de-risk oncology drug selection and quickly advance multiple high-quality assets.

CONTACT
Rajan Jethwa, CEO and Founder
Ellipses Pharma
London, UK
Tel: +44 20 3743 0992
Email: media@ellipses.life