How Sanofi accelerates treatment for patients in need

CLIENT
Sanofi

VERTICAL
Life sciences

PRODUCT
Bonterra Grants Management

Sanofi is an innovative global healthcare company dedicated to chasing the miracles of science to improve people's lives. They make this commitment a reality by working to discover, develop, and deliver medicines and vaccines for patients in need. Unfortunately, thousands of patients around the world can't access these life-saving treatments through commercial channels due to geographic location or financial circumstances. To help dismantle these barriers, Sanofi has implemented a series of humanitarian aid programs that work to deliver treatments to those who wouldn't otherwise have access. The Rare Humanitarian Program is the first, the largest, and the longest running program of its kind to treat patients with lysosomal storage disorders — a group of rare genetic conditions caused by enzyme deficiencies.

Although the Rare Humanitarian Program has been running for over 30 years, **Sanofi unlocked a new way to expedite applications and accelerate approvals in early 2023 when they moved the program onto a digital platform.** The Patient Online Referral Tool, also known as PORT, is managed entirely through Bonterra's Grants Management solution.

To learn more about the history of Sanofi's Rare Humanitarian Program, how it builds sustainable support for patients in need, and how the team at Sanofi harnesses the power of technology to accelerate product delivery, we sat down with Bonnie Anderson, head of humanitarian programs, and Bill Schwarz, digital product owner and program manager at Sanofi.
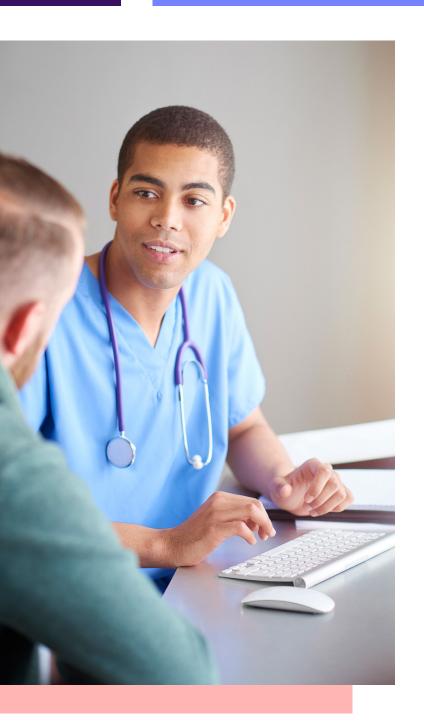
How did the program start?

The vision for the Rare Humanitarian Program was dreamed up by Henri Termeer, the former CEO of Genzyme in 1991. Henri believed that, as a company, if you're going to create medicine that is transformative and often the only disease treatment available, you have an obligation to make it available to patients across the globe, regardless of their economic circumstances or where they live. So, when Genzyme rolled out the industry's very first commercial treatment for Gaucher disease, it was also made available to eligible patients around the world through the Rare Humanitarian Program.

When Sanofi acquired Genzyme in 2011, the program was moved into Sanofi's scope of work and has continued to grow and flourish under its leadership. In alignment with Henri's original vision, as the company developed new commercial treatments for lysosomal storage disorders, they were also made available through the Rare Humanitarian Program. Today, the program supports six disease areas, including Fabry, Acid Sphingomyelinase Deficiency (ASMD), Gaucher, Mucopolysaccharidosis type I (MPS I), Mucopolysaccharidosis type II (MPS II), and Pompe through eight different products.

How do eligible patients access treatment?

Patients seeking treatment through the program are required to contact a local physician who can help them apply for inclusion. If eligible, Sanofi will approve the product for up to six months at a time and require close monitoring and updates from the physician. "It's not just about receiving the drug, it's really about fostering an ongoing relationship between the treating physician and the patient receiving the treatment," said Bonnie Anderson.

Once a patient has been admitted to the program, they're eligible for the treatment for as long as it's needed. In many cases, patients exit the program once the product becomes commercially available in their region, demonstrating a level of sustainability.

"While humanitarian programs are hugely important, they can't solve everything," said Bonnie. "You need a collective effort between patients, physicians, and policy makers to come together in order to build something that is truly sustainable."

Today, the Rare Humanitarian Program donates 100,000 vials and supports more than 1,100 patients annually in more than 70 countries, including patients in war zones like Ukraine, Gaza, and Sudan, and sanctioned countries like Cuba.

How was the program managed before Bonterra Grants Management?

When the program first started, everything was done manually with paper applications. When a physician would mail or fax an application, it was collected and reviewed by the Sanofi team on a monthly basis.

In 2013, the program was moved to SharePoint, which housed scanned PDFs of handwritten applications from treating physicians. Once the application was uploaded to SharePoint, it would be manually routed from the humanitarian team to the medical personnel responsible for reviewing an application within the specific disease area. Although the SharePoint site was an improvement, it was still reliant on handwritten applications, paper forms, and manual workflows.

What were the biggest pain points of the legacy processes?

1 Delayed submissions

In both instances — physical files and SharePoint workflows — the application process required the treating physician to get in touch with a local medical liaison from Sanofi. From there, the request would be manually handled by the medical personnel. This upfront piece that required a physician to track down the right contact would often cause long delays — time that many patients don't have.

2 Back-and-forth communications

Relying on handwritten, emailed applications also caused unnecessary delays. In many cases, the handwriting was illegible, forms were scanned sideways or upside down, or were incomplete. This required the reviewers to send forms back to the applicants for completion, creating a lot of back and forth and adding time onto the entire process.

3 Lack of reporting capabilities

Once the program moved to SharePoint, the Sanofi team was able to more easily drop their data into Excel for analysis. Unfortunately, it would still need to be migrated into other internal tools that were used for reporting. Without having a single source of truth for their data, the Sanofi team struggled to build reports for key stakeholders quickly and effectively.

How has Bonterra Grants Management helped address these pain points?

By implementing Bonterra Grants Management, the Sanofi team was able to put the application directly into the hands of physicians, cutting out the step that requires them to connect with a Sanofi medical liaison and reducing the time it takes for a patient to receive treatment. Today, if a physician hears about the program, they can log into PORT and directly submit an application on behalf of their patient.

Additionally, if an application is submitted with missing information or reaches a bottleneck in the review process, the system sends automatic reminders and nudges along the way. Plus, the Sanofi team can drill down into the status of a request at any given point, creating increased visibility for all stakeholders in the review cycle.

The Sanofi team took the transition to Grants Management as an opportunity to revisit application questions, workflow steps, approval criteria, and more to streamline workflows and simplify steps. They also increased compliance by adding a mandatory training component, which requires physicians to confirm a level of understanding of the treatment before approval, strengthening the program and ensuring compliance.

After launching Grants Management, the first applicant was a physician in Uganda — a new country for the program. From submission to approval, the entire process took just under 36 hours. For the Sanofi team, it was especially exciting to have a new physician in a new country successfully submit an application through PORT.

> "Bonterra Grants Management created a one-stop location where we can easily view every step of the process and centrally manage all of our data. Having alternate approvers within the workflow has also made such a difference for our team. For example, if someone is on vacation or leaves the company, an application gets automatically rerouted to another reviewer.
>
> — Bill Schwarz, digital product owner and program manager

Bonterra

> " Overall, the digital site gave us broader access to more physicians, helped us scale back application questions, and allowed us to have a touchpoint with all of the physicians we work with, ultimately allowing us to build more connections and strengthen relationships with our physicians.

— Bonnie Anderson, head of humanitarian programs

Looking forward to continued partnership

We're honored that the Sanofi Rare Humanitarian Program team uses our technology to provide critical treatment to patients in need, regardless of their location. We applaud their work to break down geographical boundaries, build sustainable treatment options, and help patients today and into the future. We can't wait to see how they continue to expand the program and change the lives of those impacted by lysosomal storage disorders.

If you're a grantmaker looking for ways to streamline and simplify all stages of the grants lifecycle, see how Bonterra Grants Management can help and connect with one of our experts.