

Employment Climate in the Clinical Research Industry

By Norman M. Goldfarb

The author conducted a survey of 20 staffing firms that exhibited at the Drug Information Association (DIA) Annual Meeting in June 2007. The firms represent a broad cross section of the clinical research industry. Their focus, in general, is on pharmaceutical and contract research organization (CRO) employers, rather than research sites. The largest part of the market is for clinical research associates (CRAs).

The survey question was:

"Over the past year, in clinical research, for your firm, roughly what percentage increase or decrease did you see in the number of open positions and the number of people looking for a new position?"

All 20 staffing firms saw increases in demand. Only 25% saw increases in supply. Figure 1 displays a scatter chart of the results. The median number of open positions (demand) increased by 22.5%, up slightly from 20% in the 2006 survey. The median number of people looking for a position (supply) decreased by 10%, a significant change from the 5% increase in the 2006 survey. Over the two-year period, demand increased by 47% while supply decreased by 5%.

The reported increase in demand probably reflects the ripple effect of people moving to new employers and creating open positions behind them. The reported decrease in supply may reflect perceptions of difficulty in filling positions, rather than absolute numbers of available people. In any case, the direction of the market is clear: demand continues very strong while supply is increasingly problematic.

These trends should:

- Increase length of time that open positions stay open.
- Reduce employee turnover because people are not as easy to move.
- Increase compensation for people with experience, professional degrees and certification, and other attributes indicative of competence.
- Increase the employability of newly-trained personnel and demand for training and education services.
- Increase study delays.
- Cause sponsors to conserve site monitoring resources by selecting research sites more carefully.
- Support continuing growth of clinical research in developing countries with more personnel availability.

The following 20 firms participated in the survey:

Advanced Clinical Services	Kelly Scientific Resources	Recruitech International
Aerotek	Kforce	Smith Hanley
Clinical Resource Network	Klein Management Systems	SRG Wolfe
CSA	MedFocus	Targeted Clinical Staffing Solutions

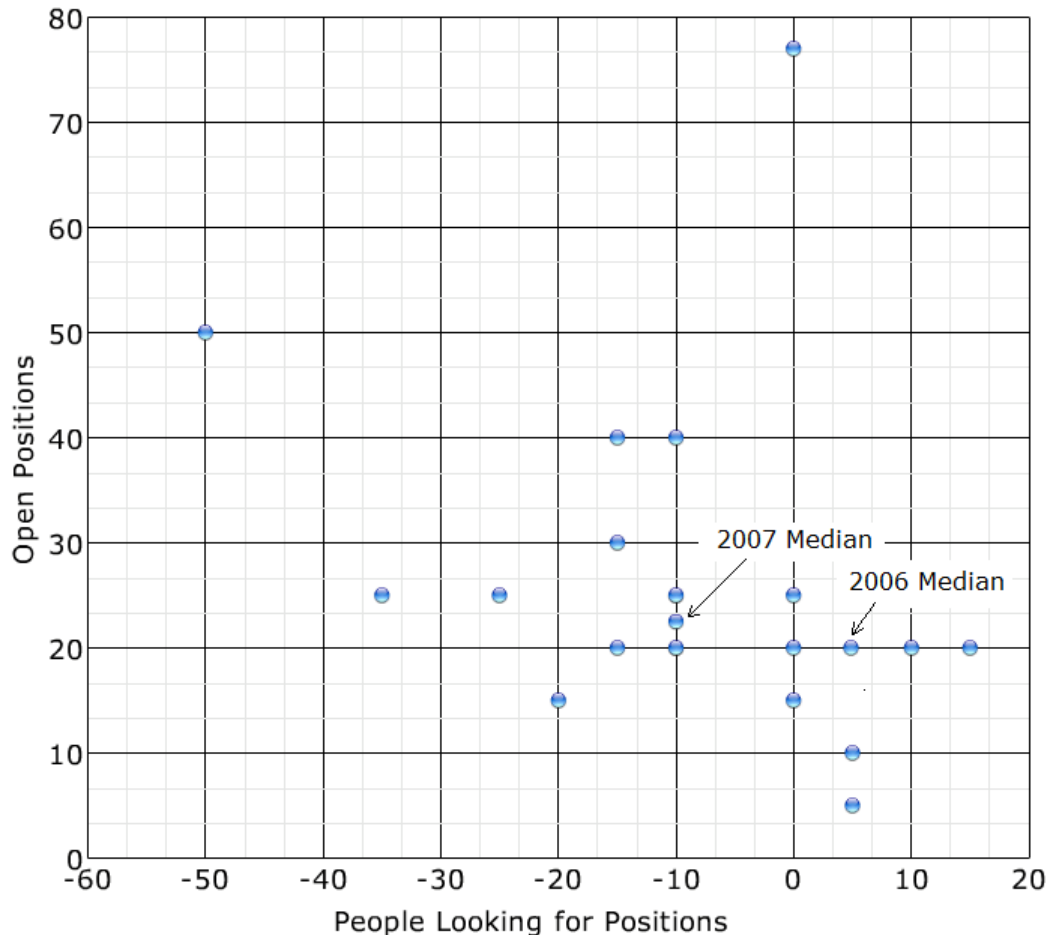
Favorite Healthcare Staffing
i3 pharma resourcing
Joule

Medical Staffing Network
On Assignment
Placemart Personnel Service

The Cambridge Group
Volt Life Sciences

Website addresses for these firms are available at
<http://www.firstclinical.com/directories/staffing.html>.

Figure 1. Change in Supply and Demand for Clinical Research Personnel (2006-2007)



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