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Morrisville CRO expands oncology unit

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A Triangle contract research organization (CRO) says it sees huge growth potential in oncology work, and is expanding its team to bring a “laser focus” into the speciality.

Morrisville-based Worldwide Clinical Trials – a mid-sized CRO – has announced the hiring of Gaurav Sharma as the company’s newest senior vice president, with a special focus in oncology.

Sharma says the formation of his position is part of a larger strategy by the company to build out its oncology capabilities, hoping to corner a growing segment of the CRO market.

While the company refuses to provide specific numbers regarding how many of its researchers are currently dedicated to oncology or how many more will be added, Sharma says 50 percent have performed three or more oncology trials within the last five years.

Only five percent of the company’s researchers are dedicated to oncology. Sharma says not only does the company plan to increase that number, but that the market is organically demanding more oncology research of companies like Worldwide. “Over the last



A fast-growing Morrisville CRO is expanding its oncology practice.

20-30 years the standard of care for oncology has been surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy,” he says. “But it is changing now, and it is really important to understand where we are now.”

According to Worldwide data, about 45 percent of the oncology research market is held by companies with less than 10 candidates in their pipeline. The company thinks it can cater to these smaller companies better than its larger competitors.

“That means these are very niche biotech companies, they are not major pharmas,” he says. “Worldwide, being a uncommon mid-sized CRO, is actually best placed to deal with these biotech

customers.”

Sharma says as a smaller sized company, they can spend more time consulting and advising biotech companies, but still bring international capabilities needed to successfully complete the trials.

Prior to joining Worldwide, Sharma last served as a senior VP at Premier Research and has held several senior roles of increasing responsibility with ICON plc, Takeda and Parexel.

He says building out a team of experienced and expert researchers is essential to the company’s new strategy, as not only are oncology trials becoming more abundant, they are becoming more complex.