

Employment Climate in the Clinical Research Industry

By Norman M. Goldfarb

The author conducted a survey of 11 staffing firms that represent a broad cross section of the clinical research industry. Their focus, in general, is on permanent and contract pharmaceutical and contract research organization (CRO) employers. The largest part of the market is for clinical research associates (CRAs).

The survey question was:

"Compared to this time last year, in clinical research, for your firm, roughly what percentage increase or decrease have you seen in the number of open positions and the number of people looking for new positions?"

Results of the survey (Figure 1) show that median demand for personnel increased by 10% and median supply declined by 5%. The data points are scattered, but, according to most of the respondents, the market has tightened in the last year but not as much as in the previous year. It appears that some respondents attribute the tightening to increased demand and others attribute it to decreased supply.

Over the past four years, median demand increased by an average of 11% per year, a cumulative increase of 53%. In contrast, over the same period, median supply held steady, until this year, when it decreased by 5%. This is the first year since 2007 in which respondents reported reduced median supply.

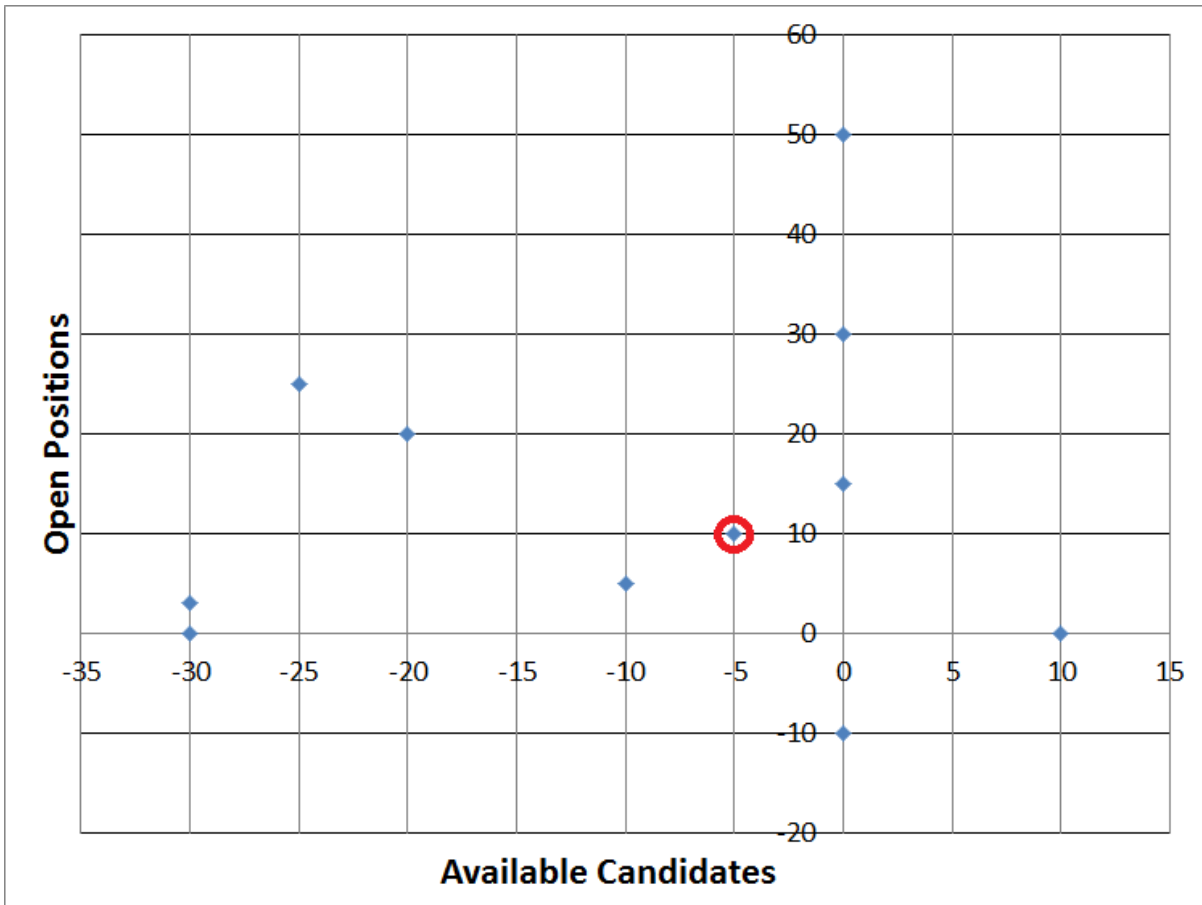
Risk-based monitoring (RBM) should, eventually, reduce the demand for CRAs, but, to date, that effect has not been significant. Some respondents are seeing very strong demand for CRAs and others are seeing a very limited supply of experienced CRAs, with multiple offers common. Training inexperienced CRAs remains an unappealing option for employers. Anecdotally, some field CRAs are resisting limitations on their ability to visit sites because it interferes with their ability to manage them. There also appears to be increased demand for people who manage RBM programs and analyze the data.

The following staffing firms participated in the survey:

- Advanced Clinical
- Aerotek
- Barrington James
- Brunel Life Sciences
- Green Key Resources
- Kelly Services
- Planet Pharma
- R&D Partners
- TalentMine
- The Clinical Resource Network
- Valesta Clinical Research Solutions

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

**Figure 1. Supply and Demand for Clinical Research Personnel
(Change from 2014 to 2015)**



Author

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