

BUSINESS

Parexel Revs Up AI Drive, Targets 6-Month Trial Time Cut

By Hayate Horiguchi October 8, 2026



(from right) James Anthony, Jennifer Warneke, Shigehiro Miki

Parexel International sees artificial intelligence potentially shaving as much as six months off clinical trial timelines as the global CRO steps up its use of AI and other digital tools to accelerate drug development and drive business growth.

In a recent interview in Tokyo, James Anthony, global head of Parexel Biotech, said competition among CROs is increasingly being shaped by their ability to harness AI to shorten drug



James Anthony, Global Head, Parexel Biotech, Parexel International

development timelines. He stressed the growing need for CROs to help clients make high-quality decisions earlier in development and efficiently reach key regulatory and clinical milestones.

Parexel is looking to expand the use of its AI tools across clinical trial processes. By cutting the time required for individual tasks and reducing delays between them, the company believes it can eventually shorten clinical trials, which typically take years to complete. It plans to roll out these capabilities globally, including in Japan.

One of Parexel's key initiatives is Parexel Precision Pathway, an operating model that brings together AI-enabled tools, digital technologies, and coordinated processes across the clinical trial lifecycle.

Clinical trials involve multiple specialized functions, from study design and site selection to patient enrollment and data collection. Even when individual tasks are performed efficiently, delays in transferring information and responsibilities between teams can slow overall progress. Precision Pathway is designed to reduce these gaps by improving coordination and information sharing across stages.

Another component is Integrated Data Delivery (IDD), a system that enables Parexel staff to review clinical trial data entered by investigators and clinical research coordinators at study sites in near real time.

The system helps identify missing patient data and other issues early, rather than allowing them to surface later in a trial, when resolving discrepancies and obtaining additional information from medical institutions can take considerable time.

By upgrading these tools and integrating them more closely, Parexel expects to accumulate time savings across different stages of clinical trials, ultimately achieving its goal of reducing

study timelines by up to six months.

Even as Parexel embraces AI, Jennifer Warneke, executive vice president and head of global project leadership, stressed that people remain central to clinical trial operations, with technology taking on more data-processing and routine tasks.

“There are AI components, but it’s very much driven by people,” she said.

The idea is to free clinical development professionals to focus on higher-level decisions and problem-solving. Parexel is already seeing measurable efficiency gains, including a 50% reduction in the time required for site selection and savings of up to 60% in preparing investigational new drug (IND) application documents.



Jennifer Warneke, EVP, Head of Global Project Leadership, Parexel International

Market Entry Barriers in Japan



Shigehiro Miki, General Manager, Japan, Parexel International

Parexel’s Japan general manager, Shigehiro Miki, meanwhile, said overseas biotech companies without a local presence still face barriers to entering the Japanese market.

“Barriers to entering Japan still remain,” he said, noting that overseas companies have long viewed the country as a market where drug development is expensive, slow, and burdened by complicated procedures.

Although Japan’s development environment has been changing, he said those improvements have not been sufficiently

communicated to overseas companies.

Miki also highlighted the importance of Japan's drug pricing system in these firms' decisions about whether to bring their drug development programs to the country. "Predictability in pricing policy is particularly important for smaller biotechs with limited financial resources when deciding whether to pursue development in Japan ahead of markets such as the US," he said.

Parexel aims to help bridge that gap by connecting overseas drug developers with Japanese medical institutions, regulators, and patients, while promoting a greater awareness of the country's evolving clinical development environment and market opportunities.

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