Keeping Up the Good Work

Last year, when the American Medical Student Association (AMSA) issued its first scorecard evaluating conflict-of-interest policies at American medical colleges and colleges of osteopathic medicine, Penn's school was one of only seven to receive an A. The PharmFree Scorecard assessed the policies in several areas that held the potential for conflict of interest. These included gifts and meals from industry; consulting relationships; disclosure of financial conflicts; pharmaceutical samples; and degree of access that industry sales personnel had to the medical school or hospital.

This June, the association, with the help of the Pew Prescription Project, issued its second scorecard. This time around, it was equally parsimonious with its A's. Only nine of the 149 schools (6 percent) received the highest mark, Penn Medicine among them. Thirty-five schools received Fs; 23 of those received the mark because they declined to submit their policies for review. Others received a grade of "In Process" because they were reviewing or revising their policies. The good news, according to AMSA, is that more than one-fifth of U.S. medical schools improved their conflict-of-interest policies in the last year, and the number of perfect scores increased.

A recent study published in *Archives of Internal Medicine* (May 11, 2009) strongly suggests that Penn Medicine's policies have had a noticeable effect on its students. The authors include David T. Grande, M.D., M.P.A., assistant professor of medicine at Penn. The study compared the attitudes of medical students at Penn, which has restrictive policies toward pharmaceutical marketing, with those at the University of Miami School of Medicine, which has less restrictive policies and permits gifts, meals, and samples from pharmaceutical firms. The researchers sought to test the students' attitudes toward the more expensive cholesterol drug Lipitor and the less expensive drug Zocor. During the testing, some of the students were provided with promotional materials for Lipitor – to measure whether their attitudes toward the drug would be influenced. As the authors report, "Students at Miami responded as we hypothesized, shifting their preferences in the direction of the branding exposure (i.e., Lipitor). However, students at Penn had a boomerang response, i.e., a behavioral response opposite of the implied marketing intent." One explanation the authors suggest is Penn's "strong school policy." The policy, that is, that earned the school an A from AMSA.

The computations made for the PharmFree Scorecard seem simple compared to those involved in determining what could be called the "power rankings" in Alzheimer's disease research. Three of Penn Medicine's leading investigators are featured in this issue's "What's New in Alzheimer's Research?" (pp. 20-21). They also appear in a recent article in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*, "Alzheimer's Disease Research: Scientific Productivity and Impact of the Top 100 Investigators in the Field" (March 2009). Aaron A. Sorensen, of Collexis Holdings, Inc., has crunched the numbers, making use of the "author-disambiguation algorithm," the "scientometric viewpoint,"

and an investigator's "H-Rank-minus-SeTH-Rank disparity as well as its polarity." Based on papers published between January 1, 1985, and April 21, 2008, Sorensen has produced three lists of researchers.

Among the most prolific investigators, Virginia Lee, Ph.D., M.B.A., director of Penn's Center for Neurodegenerative Disease Research, and John Q. Trojanowski, M.D., Ph.D., director of Penn's Institute on Aging and director of the Alzheimer's Disease Center, are ranked together at 10th. Gerard D. Schellenberg, Ph.D., a recent recruit to the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, is ranked 89th. In addition, Murray Grossman, M.D., Ed.D., professor of neurology at Penn, is ranked 98th.

Lee is 8th among most-cited authors and Trojanowski 10th. They reappear among the authors with highest H-indices, which measure the overall impact of an investigator: Lee is 3rd and Trojanowski 4th. Schellenberg is ranked in the middle of both lists.

Sorensen also considered the impact of the two major research awards in the field, the MetLife Alzheimer Award and the Potamkin Prize. He notes as well which investigators have been elected to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences. Lee and Trojanowski have won both awards and are members of the Institute. Schellenberg has received both awards.

Current faculty members are not the only ones with strong Penn connections to make the power rankings. Allen D. Roses, M.D. '67, G.M.E. '71, of Duke University, was the first investigator to identify a susceptibility gene for late-onset AD, apolipoprotein E. Not surprisingly, he is ranked 3rd among "Most Cited." He is also named as 30th among "Most Prolific" and 26th among authors with the highest overall impact. ■

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