

To: Murray Sagsveen <MSagsveen@aan.com>  
From: alexeikoudinov@neurobiologyoflipids.org  
Subject: AAN Potamkin Prize and D.Selkoe conflict of interest: a follow up  
Cc: "Catherine Rydell" <crydell@aan.com>, "Neurology" <Kathy\_Pieper@URMC.Rochester.edu>  
Bcc: rsmith@bmj.com, rennie@itsa.ucsf.edu, Sharon.Begley@wsj.com, weissr@washpost.com, tinkerr@attbi.com, notdisclosed.recipients@nobel.se  
Attached:

26 March 2003

Dear Dr.Sagsveen,

This is a follow up message for my correspondence with you regarding D. Selkoe conflict in serving AAN Potamkin Prize chairperson.

As I did not hear from you since December 2003, one month ago (27 Feb. 2003) I alerted you about my open letter to Public Citizen Health Research Group (Ref.1).

The feedback of one reader asks the question: what is the value of the prize from such people? I believe that this question is shared by many of those 2000+ readers who read to date my letter (Ref.1).

I further would like to alert you of my latest letter in BMJ (Ref.2). Hope you will find it helpful.

I did notice that this year Potamkin Prize (to be formally awarded at the 2003 AAN annual meeting in just few days) continues to tribute amyloid dogma (Ref.3).

Sincerely,

Alexei Koudinov  
neuroscientist and editor  
<http://anzwers.org/free/neurology/reports/>  
<http://neurobiologyoflipids.org>

cc: Victor Potamkin, Nobel Foundation, Neurology, BMJ, WAME, members of Alzheimer's neuroscience research community

References:

(1) Koudinov AR. Open letter to Public Citizen's Health Research Group on Alzheimer's disease research. SAGE KE, BMJ (21, 27 Feb 2003) Available at:

<http://sageke.sciencemag.org/cgi/eletters/sageke;2002/34/or10#181> ;  
<http://bmj.com/cgi/eletters/325/7357/226/a#29825>

(2) Koudinov AR. Alzheimer's disease vaccine danger: take it straightforward, not double-edged. BMJ (23 March 2003) Available at: <http://bmj.com/cgi/eletters/316/7129/446#30661>

(3) A citation tributing this year Potamkin Prize 2003 winners: "The research efforts of Dr. Holtzman and Dr. Bush have provided the important and essential basic foundation for understanding how to treat the pathology related to amyloid accumulation in the brain - one of the significant risk factors associated with Alzheimer's disease," said Roger N. Rosenberg, MD, member of the Potamkin Prize Committee and past President of the AAN. "Because of their work, medical scientists are closer than ever to both understanding the bio-chemical processes that cause Alzheimer's disease and to developing more effective strategies for diagnosing and treating Alzheimer's disease." Available at:

[http://www4.medica.de/cipp/md\\_medica/custom/pub/content.lang,2/ticket.g\\_a\\_s\\_t/oid.9262](http://www4.medica.de/cipp/md_medica/custom/pub/content.lang,2/ticket.g_a_s_t/oid.9262)

-----correspondence item 2-----

At 04:50 PM 17/12/2002 -0600, Murray Sagsveen wrote:

Dr. Koudinov,

I briefed the Academy's Executive Committee about your concerns, and the Executive Committee has referred the matter to the Academy's Ethics Committee.

Murray G. Sagsveen  
General Counsel and Associate Executive Director  
American Academy of Neurology  
1080 Montreal Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55116-2311  
Telephone: 651-695-2780 ~ Fax: 651-361-4880  
msagsveen@aan.com

-----correspondence item 3-----

At 02:13 AM 11/12/2002 +0200, Alexei Koudinov wrote:

Dear Dr.Sagsveen,

I appreciate your reply that is narrowed to a particular inquiry of D.Selkoe conflict with Potamkin Prize Award 2001 to D.Selkoe corporate employee Dr.D.Schenk.

I had an opportunity to deliver to you plenty of facts that you just do not mention (or do not wish to consider?), including D.Selkoe conflict of interest in accepting the post of the Potamkin Prize selection committee chair, and the award of the Potamkin Prize 2002 to C.Haass, a recent member of Selkoe group, having several joint publications within the last five years.

I feel that you are willing to substitute the apparent break of ethics by D.Selkoe (that you should make publically known) with some other issues.

It is not surprising as Dr.R.Rosenberg, former Potamkin Prize selection committee chairperson, former AAN president, and current AMA Archives of Neurology editor, did not reply on any of my several notes of D.Selkoe apparent misconduct (that I was sending to Dr.Rosenberg since May, 2002). I, however, got an indication of Dr.Rosenberg strong willingness to defend D.Selkoe amyloid story in a recent editorial material published in a September 2002 issue of Archives of Neurology. You should be aware that amyloid story is a dominant dogma of Alzheimer's research that is developed by Selkoe into his corporate commercial application. See my recent BMJ letter (of December 1, 2002) for further details:

<http://bmj.com/cgi/eletters/316/7129/446#27397> (read to date by 700+ Alzheimer's neurologists and neuroscientists)

Well. I do not share your conclusion and believe that there is a severe conflict of interest. In fact, Selkoe has many conflicts, as he serves on editorial board of many biomedical/neuroscience journals and was publishing without acknowledging his corporate financial interest. Some of the above become publically know, as you can see in a correction note of a recent (27 Sept 2002) Science magazine issue.

I thought you should distance from D.Selkoe conflict, but you seem hiding Dr.Selkoe non disclosure (while protecting the Prize credibility).

I therefore work myself on making D.Selkoe apparent conflict publically know. The wisdom of neurologists

and neuroscientists worldwide will justify whether the conflict is the case. This wisdom may also question whether your actions were adequate.

This is what impaired public and professional trust in Alzheimer's research demands from all. Its' a pity we do not share this viewpoint.

Sincerely,

Alexei Koudinov

cc: BMJ, Science, WAME

-----correspondence item 4-----

At 02:11 PM 3/12/2002 -0600, Murray Sagsveen wrote:

Thank you for providing the additional information regarding your concerns about the Potamkin Prize. I carefully reviewed the selection process when Dr. Schenk received the Potamkin Prize. Dr. Selkoe did not participate in the discussion during the subcommittee meeting (by teleconference), did not attempt to influence any subcommittee members opinion concerning the selection of the prize winner, and did not vote on any of the nominees for the prize. My review further revealed that the subcommittee (Dr. Selkoe abstaining) unanimously voted to award the 2001 Potamkin Prize to Dr. Schenk.

As you know, the Academy has a stringent conflict of interest policy (Neurology 1998;50:332-334). In accordance with this policy, I have advised the committee members to carefully review the information about the nominees, to sign and return a disclosure statement indicating any potential conflicts of interest involving the nominees, and to recuse themselves if they have a serious conflict of interest (i.e., a conflict that can't be appropriately mitigated by disclosure).

The Potamkin Prize is a very significant award for the neurology community, and the Academy is making every possible effort to maintain a thoughtful, fair, and objective selection process.

Murray G. Sagsveen  
General Counsel and Associate Executive Director  
American Academy of Neurology  
1080 Montreal Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55116-2311  
Telephone: 651-695-2780 ~ Fax: 651-361-4880  
msagsveen@aan.com

-----correspondence item 5-----

At 03:11 PM 28/11/2002 +0200, Alexei Koudinov wrote:

Dear Dr.Sagsveen,

Thank you for your response. I would like to further alert you of the following two citations that I deem relevant to our communication.

-----

Wilmshurst P. Institutional corruption in medicine. BMJ 325, 1232-5 (23 November 2002).

Free access Full Text:

<http://bmj.com/cgi/content/full/325/7374/1232>

eResponses:

<http://bmj.com/cgi/eletters/325/7374/1232#27220>

LEAD PARAGRAPH: "The General Medical Council recently found that Mr Anjan Kumar Banerjee and Professor Timothy John Peters were guilty of serious professional misconduct for research misconduct committed a decade earlier. Peter Wilmshurst argues that this is not just a case of one doctor covering up for another but of corruption at a senior level in academic institutions

For the triumph of evil it is only necessary for good men to do nothing  
Edmund Burke"

-----

Wilmshurst P. The code of silence. Lancet 349, 567-569 (1997)

"...The usual response of higher authorities to allegations of misconduct is to refuse to hold an inquiry or to claim that a secret inquiry disproved the allegations. When action is taken, it is often inadequate...

...There should be tough sanctions against those who help to conceal dishonesty by others..."

-----

As I stated previously I do not know Dr.Selkoe personally, have no personal conflict with him, and have no competing financial interest. I aim to safeguard the fair development the field of Alzheimer's disease research that I involved in for the last ten years for the public and patients benefit.

Sincerely,

Alexei Koudinov, MD, PhD

cc: Mr.Robert Potamkin, Science, BMJ, World Association of Medical Editors, WSJ, Washington Post, Newsweek

-----correspondence item 6-----

At 08:44 AM 25/11/2002 -0600, Murray Sagsveen wrote:

Dr. Koudinov,

Thank you for the detailed information. I will consult with others, review again the information, and respond as soon as possible.

Murray G. Sagsveen  
General Counsel and Associate Executive Director  
American Academy of Neurology  
1080 Montreal Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55116-2311  
Telephone: 651-695-2780 ~ Fax: 651-361-4880  
msagsveen@aan.com

-----correspondence item 7-----

At 01:27 AM 22/11/2002 +0200, Alexei Koudinov wrote:

Murray G. Sagsveen  
General Counsel and Associate Executive Director  
American Academy of Neurology  
1080 Montreal Avenue

St. Paul, MN 55116-2311

21 November 2002

Dear Dr.Sagsveen,

Thank you very much for your recent response on my inquiries regarding the apparent conflict of interest between Dr.Selkoe service as Elan Director and his service as a chairman for the Potamkin Prize selection committee.

Your response presents the arguments to show that there is no conflict of interest in awarding AAN Potamkin Prize 2001 to Dale Schenk, Elan scientist.

I do not share your conclusion. I believe that you underevaluate the case as it is requested by the American Academy of Neurology Policy on Conflict of Interest (Neurology 1998, Vol.50, 332-334, see AAN web site for the .PDF reprint of this document). I also believe that should you grant the case evaluation to a panel of independent ethicists they would come to a different verdict.

First, because by the AAN definition there is the conflict between D.Selkoe service as Elan director and Elan shareholder (see Ref.1 for further reading) and his service as a Chairman of the selection committee for the Potamkin Prize, that continuously tributes the molecule of direct financial interest for D.Selkoe and his corporation (see section 'I. Definition' of the American Academy of Neurology Policy on Conflict of Interest, Neurology 1998, Vol.50, 332-334; also see materials that you should have from Dr.Criggs office).

Second, because you did not consider this year 2002 Potamkin prize award to C. Haass, who shares with Selkoe several publications within the last 5 years.

I shared my concern not only with you, Dr.Rosenberg (editor for AMA Archives of Neurology, whom I initially wrote my letter at the begining of September 2002 and who did not reply), and Dr.Criggs (editor for Neurology, an AAN publication, who communicated to you my inquiry), but also with those 1600+ readers (of my letter to the editor to the British Medical Journal, BMJ, Ref.1) who should be involved in Alzheimer's research and patients care. This is because I share the wisdom of the BMJ editorial that "transparency is the key" and that "trans- parency and accountability are increasingly expected in all aspects of society". I believe that many of those who read my letter think alike.

Sincerely,

Alexei Koudinov, MD, PhD  
Russian Academy of Medical sciences  
neuroscientist and editor  
<http://anzwers.org/free/neurology>  
<http://neurobiologyoflipids.org>

cc: Prof.Criggs, Neurology editor

References:

1. Koudinov AR. Ethical conundrums: an Alzheimer's case. BMJ, published online 12 September 2002  
<http://bmj.com/cgi/eletters/325/7363/0/g#25404>
2. Editorials. Beyond conflict of interest BMJ 1998;317:291-292, Available at:  
<http://bmj.com/cgi/content/full/317/7154/291>

-----correspondence item 8-----

At 08:44 PM 13/11/2002 -0600, Murray Sagsveen wrote:

Dr. Koudinov,

Your e-mail concerning the Potamkin Prize selection process has been forwarded to me. I reviewed the process concerning the 2001 prize, and it appears that:

- \* The chairman, Dr. Selkoe, did not make any comments about the nominees during the one telephone conference (when the winner was selected).
- \* He did not provide any evaluations or reviews of the nominees before, during, or after the committee's deliberations.
- \* He did not participate in the vote on the nominees.
- \* He did not nominate any of the nominees.
- \* The voting members of the committee unanimously selected Dr. Schenk for the 2001 Potamkin Prize.
- \* The Academy's leadership previously investigated your complaint and determined that the selection process was handled properly.

Accordingly, it appears that the selection process and the subsequent investigation were handled properly.

However (by a cc of this e-mail) , I will request that, in the future, all committee members be reminded about the Academy's conflict of interest policy (Neurology 1998;50:332-334) at the beginning of the selection process.

Please contact me, at your convenience, if you would like to discuss this matter.

Murray G. Sagsveen  
General Counsel and Associate Executive Director  
American Academy of Neurology  
1080 Montreal Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55116-2311  
Telephone: 651-695-2780 ~ Fax: 651-361-4880  
msagsveen@aan.com