



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO
MEDICINE

When to Say Yes or No,
How to Achieve Local and National Visibility

AAS Early Career Development Course

Jeffrey B. Matthews, MD FACS

Dallas B. Phemister Professor and Chairman
Surgeon-in-Chief, The University of Chicago

A 32 year old Assistant Professor of Surgery is in the second year of a 3 year research start-up package, while also attempting to grow a clinical practice in general surgery (50% commitment).

The dean's office calls regarding a vacancy on the IRB that needs a physician-scientist. There are no other surgeons on the committee.

Yes or no?



Framing the problem

- Career advancement including academic promotion requires focused scholarship and the creation of an original body of work
- Advancement also involves progressive participation in regional and national activities
 - Society committees, invited lectures, study section, manuscript reviews, chapter writing, editorial board position
- Local institutional “citizenship” is also valued
 - Committees, lectures, attendance at department meetings, events, local society work
- Tension between self-interests and altruism – some requests are distractions, some lay track for future advancement, some are citizenship/obligations

Should the Assistant Professor join the IRB?

- **Yes**

- Surgeon presence on IRB is important
- Responsibility to do work on behalf of department
- Resonant with surgeon-scientist phenotype, good learning opportunity
- Highly meaningful activity
- Visible and valuable leadership role with institutional impact

- **No**

- Distraction from start-up efforts in critical phase of research development
- Clinical obligations
- Major time commitment irrespective of whether compensated
- Relatively junior and inexperienced to adequately serve duties
- No external impact

Yes or no to the IRB?

- Might be appropriate for more senior faculty with established labs, or formerly funded
- Timing is wrong
- Chair should protect



What if it was the transfusion committee?

Hospital/department committee work

- Everybody must do something on behalf of the larger enterprise, but early academic careers should be protected from these, especially high-intensity time commitments (IRB, promotions committee, admissions committee)
- Ideally will be consistent with faculty member's career track (clinician, clinician-educator, etc)



Time/effort and compensation considerations

- Academic and leadership advancement involves learning to multitask and to deliver on-time and high quality work
 - “If you want something done, ask a busy person”
- Need an understanding of what is required for each new assignment : frequency of meetings, between-meeting work assignments
- Piling on of multiple small, simple but worthwhile activities can accrete into an unmanageable situation distracting from main responsibilities
- Comp plans can unintentionally misalign incentives or create unrealistic expectations of \$ or effort support that are part of overall job description

Most of these yes/no decisions should not revolve around the question of compensation for the activity.

If they do, it may indicate a mission/vision/values mismatch...

Manuscript reviews

- Some argue this is a waste of time: it is uncompensated, you get no “credit”, and it’s essentially invisible work that distracts you from other responsibilities
- I disagree. In general, you should be biased to say yes
- Heart and soul of an academic career is participation in peer review
 - You expect your own work to be expertly evaluated; to not offer the same for other investigators is the height of hypocrisy
 - It’s a duty and an honor. Do it well.
 - Good reviewers get rewarded: elevation to editorial board, other opportunities (program committees, invited reviews, *etc.*)

Manuscript reviews: caveats

- No more than ~3 reviews a month in aggregate, or more than 1-2 for a single journal unless you have higher level of responsibility (editorial board membership, leadership role in organization)
- Do not expect to be put on the ed board after only a handful of reviews
- You should not review outside area of expertise, but don't draw too narrowly
- If you say no, state a reason and if possible suggest a colleague as alternate
- Prioritize the highest impact journals or the ones that are most relevant for your career interests – you do not need to review for every journal in your field
- If you've never heard of the journal, say no.
- Never accept honorary editorial board positions from sketchy publishers

Time management

- Increasing demands on your time requires learning efficiency
- You need to complete tasks in timely fashion and also do them well
 - Respect deadlines
- Reputations are built on **reliability**
- Strategies to carve out time for these additional roles
 - Early morning
 - Multitasking at home



National/international activities: yes or no?

- Essential to developing reputation, necessary for academic advancement
 - How many societies?
 - Combination of generalist and subspecialty societies
 - Limit to highest impact, most relevant
 - Which committees?
 - Relevant to career; some types are very important (program committee)
 - Importance of attendance, doing more than what is asked
 - Most organizations are meritocracies
 - Invited speaker/panelist
 - Visiting professorships
-

Questions to ask yourself

- Is it incremental work, or can I stop doing something else?
- What is the time commitment and work expectation?
- Is it coherent and aligned with my career plan or academic track?
- Does this activity apply toward promotion criteria?
- Does it build a “balanced portfolio” of activities?
- Is it part of my “duty” as a department member or academic citizen?
- Is it visible, and to the appropriate audience?
- Is there “credit” for my role? Does it increase my credibility?
- Does the activity, done well, lead to more opportunities?

If you say no too often, or inappropriately, the requests will stop...



“There is only one thing worse than being talked about
and that is not being talked about.”

Oscar Wilde *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891)

Local and national visibility

- Comes from saying YES
- Comes from creating SUBSTANCE
- Comes from growing REPUTATION for reliability
- Comes from creating a NETWORK

Scientific meetings at a crossroads?

 VIEWPOINT

JAMA, March 28, 2012—Vol 307, No. 12

Are Medical Conferences Useful? And for Whom?

John P. A. Ioannidis, MD, DSc

CONFERENCES ORGANIZED BY MEDICAL SOCIETIES and related organizations are a dominant feature of the academic, professional, and social life of all health-related disciplines. These events come in all sizes, from relatively small, local gatherings, workshops, and symposia to large international megacongresses that mobilize tens of thousands of clinicians, researchers, exhibitors, and staff to build small-sized towns for a few days. The total number of medical conferences is unknown. One source¹ lists 2012 health-related

engineering or computer science, at which full proceedings papers are presented, reviewed, and published. Moreover, in these sciences postpublication review benefits from the immediate demonstration that the technology works or does not work—as opposed to the nebulous or nonexistent validation of many biomedical findings.

Moreover, many abstracts reported at the medical meetings are never published as full-text articles,⁴ even though abstract presentations can nevertheless communicate to wide audiences premature and sometimes inaccurate results. It has long been documented that several findings change when research reports undergo more extensive peer review and are published as completed articles.³ Late-breaker sessions

You schmooze, you lose?

SundayReview | CONTRIBUTING OP-ED WRITER

Good News for Young Strivers: Networking Is Overrated

[查看简体中文版](#) | [查看繁體中文版](#)



Adam Grant AUG. 24, 2017



Nuts and Bolts of an Academic Career

- ***Achieving visibility requires the growth of your own portfolio of original scholarship and expertise – without this, the discussion is irrelevant***
- Committee work, journal reviews, and other time-consuming activities are also essential nuts and bolts in building a successful career.
- In early career, it can be hard to know which opportunities to accept. Use mentors as needed to sort out the relevant plusses and minuses.
- There are some roles that may not be glamorous or highly rewarding that are simply part of the duties of being an academic surgeon – everybody must do something
- Try to say yes to as many legitimate opportunities as you can
- As career advances, look for roles to shed to make space for new ones