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From the Editor

What is T.A.P.E.S. ?

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From the Editor

What is T.A.P.E.S. ?

TAPES, the Center of Excellence for Technology Assessment and PharmacoEconomic Services, was created in order to help pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies assess economic value in a changing health care market place. TAPES is a non-profit organization funded by a grant from the Ben Franklin Partnership (BFP), an agency designated by the State of Pennsylvania to provide assistance to local pharmaceutical and biotechnology firms.

TAPES is a cooperative venture between the Department of Health Policy at Thomas Jefferson University (TJU), and the Institute for Pharmaceutical Economics at the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science (PCPS). I serve as the Director of TAPES, while Dr. Gary Erwin, the Vice President of the Department of Professional Programs at PCPS, is the Co-Director. We have created a structure for TAPES enabling TJU and PCPS to perform cost-effectiveness studies that help answer the question "Even though a drug or treatment modality is safe, is it worth doing ?"

The primary goal of TAPES is to help biotechnology manufacturers conduct outcomes assessments for both new and established products. By conducting these studies, TAPES gives local companies the tools they need in order to prove that their products are not only safe, but also cost-effective.

Creating new pharmaceutical and biotechnological products is not as easy as it used to be. With health care reform looming like a veritable Sword of Damocles over the heads of drug and biotechnology companies, consumers and payers are demanding that in this era of accountability, cost-effectiveness should apply not only to clinicians, but to product makers as well.

Technology Assessment is a burgeoning field. Many observers believe that there may be too much expensive technology in today's medicine. The burden of proof as to the worth of new innovations now rests with the companies that produce them. For the giants of the industry, this task is daunting, but not impossible; for smaller firms it can be an overwhelming obstacle that, if not surmounted, could eventually lead to their elimination from the market place.

The Philadelphia area is home to many such small firms. The Technology Council of Greater Philadelphia has 400 member companies-Route 202 alone, the famed "Medical Mile," is home to 30 biotechnology and medical start up firms. The State of Pennsylvania has demonstrated its commitment to these businesses by funding TAPES through the auspices of the Ben Franklin Partnership. TAPES provides its research consulting expertise to members of the Ben Franklin Partnership for relatively small fees as well as providing a host of other services, including: individual training sessions, courses in clinical trials and outcomes research, and periodic conferences.

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One conference sponsored by TAPES and BFP entitled "Developing Health Care Products for Managed Care Purchasers," took place at Jefferson this past summer. Over 80 representatives of purchaser, provider, payer, and product groups attended in order to better understand the changing rules for developing biotechnology devices and pharmaceutical products in the context of managed care. Speakers focused on how outcomes research will play a major part in acceptance of and reimbursement for these products through a series of talks ranging from "The Role of Outcomes and Economic Research in Product Development," by Nelda Johnson, PharmD (TJU), to "Your Medical Device: Getting Started with the FDA," by Robert Mosenkis, President of CITECH, and "How Do Third Party Payers Decide Whether You Will Be Paid," by Jeffrey Lerner, Ph.D. (ECRI).

The TAPES Center provides an invaluable service to local and national companies. In studying technology assessment, everyone wins. Companies market more sensible products, consumers get the most "bang for their buck," and payers get the sense that what they are paying for is worthwhile.

I appreciate the great teamwork of Gary Erwin and the support he receives from Dr. Philip Gerbino, the Dean of PCPS. The future of TAPES is exciting, and I am looking forward to continuing the Jefferson tradition of a productive and beneficial relationship with PCPS. As always, I encourage members of the Jefferson community to contact me at extension 6969, or send me a letter sharing your thoughts.

- David B. Nash

References

1. Webber, J. Biotech boomlet a few miles from Philly. *Business Week*, October 19, 1992; 3288:88.