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# Medical Futures Forum 2005: The Health Policy Implications of Evidence-Based Medicine

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# Medical Futures Forum 2005: The Health Policy Implications of Evidence-Based Medicine

The 2005 Pfizer Medical Futures Forum brought together over 100 leading physician-scientists to New York City to discuss the future of medicine and to select recipients of competitive grants in academic medical research and education. The Medical Futures Forum is the centerpiece event in Pfizer's Medical and Academic Partnerships (MAP) program, which represents Pfizer's commitment to advancing science and public health through grants to faculty members and academic institutions. This Forum session raised important, thought-provoking issues about Evidence-Based Medicine, such as how the evidence is summarized, and whether the evidence is used to make important policy decisions.

Dr. Bryan Luce, Founder and Senior Research Leader at the MEDTAP Institute of United Biosource Corporation gave the keynote address. A panel of reactors to the talk included leaders from within Pfizer and academia, including Dr. Hugh Tilson, Senior Advisor to the Dean and Clinical Professor of Health Policy and Epidemiology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Dr. Nicole Lurie, Senior Natural Scientist and Paul O'Neill, Alcoa Professor of Policy Analysis, RAND Corporation. Dr. Luce's presentation was a follow-up to a recent article that he co-authored with Dr. Earl Steinberg, in Health Affairs, titled "Evidence Based? Caveat Emptor!"

Dr. Luce's talk, and the article that it was taken from, highlighted some of the serious problems with the ways that scientific evidence is both summarized and used, raising fundamental issues with Evidence-Based Medicine, that many in the academic and policy arenas take it as gospel. Though it is clear that some treatments work better than others, or equally well, health plans and Medicare have been reluctant to make coverage and reimbursement decisions that are sensitive to these differences. For example, the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act (MMA) of 2003 precludes Medicare, in the event that two health care interventions are functionally equivalent, from "employing the commonsense notion that one should not purchase a product that is more costly than another product that is equivalent to it." Dr. Luce's presentation, and the panel reactions, provoked the kind of spirited and insightful discussion that is the hallmark of the Pfizer's Medical and Academic Partnerships (MAP) program. To read more about Pfizer's MAP program, see http://www.promisingminds.com/.

**About the Author**

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