



ACNP Bulletin

American College of Neuropsychopharmacology 5034A Thoroughbred Lane, Brentwood, TN 37027
Tel: 615-324-2360 • Fax: 615-523-1715 • E-mail: acnp@acnp.org • www.acnp.org



Richard Keefe, Ph.D.



James Murrough, M.D., Ph.D.

Interview with Richard Keefe, Membership Committee Chair, on Membership Considerations for Scientists in Industry

The ACNP strives to promote the advancement of neuropsychopharmacology research and education, and to accelerate the advancement of CNS therapeutics. In the service of this mission, the College is rightly focused on promoting the best science among its membership and across the field at large, and admission to the College requires a track record of substantial contribution to neuropsychopharmacology research. While the ACNP membership is comprised largely of scientists from academia, it is recognized that scientists from industry play a vital, if at times underappreciated, role in the College. I sat down with Dr. Richard Keefe, chair of the ACNP Membership Committee, to discuss the role of members from industry in the College. Dr. Keefe has extensive experience with both academia and industry, and he has been instrumental in developing membership application resources for scientists who work in industry settings.

Dr. Murrough: In recent years, I understand that there has been an effort by the ACNP to reach out to scientists from industry to encourage them to consider applying for membership. What is the motivation for this?

Dr. Keefe: Starting in the 2000's, the College decreased pharmaceutical industry financial support and there were fewer corporate representatives at the meeting. While the move toward greater financial independence was generally viewed as positive, the leadership of the College recognized that scientists from industry represent an important component of the ACNP membership. The Program Committee was seeing fewer and fewer proposals for posters and symposia that featured clinical trials, and this may have been a reflection in part of a withdrawal by industry from participation in the College. Our current president, in fact, Dr. Anissa Abi-Dargham, has expressed that recruitment into the College of regular members from industry is one of her goals.

Dr. Murrough: Can you discuss some specific ways that membership from industry may benefit the mission of the ACNP?

Dr. Keefe: Well, one of the primary missions of the ACNP is to further drug discovery in CNS, and a rich cross talk between academic and industry researchers is critical in this regard. In some cases, the ACNP can provide a "pre-competitive" space wherein ideas can be shared in order to further the common goal of developing safe, more effective treatments for the disorders we study and treat. I think this inter-disciplinarily cross talk enriches both the College and its individual members. Ultimately, academic researchers need to be talking to the people that actually bring drugs to market in order to improve outcomes for neuropsychiatric disorders.

Dr. Murrough: What should applicants from industry know about the membership application process?

Dr. Keefe: Applicants from industry should know firstly that the ACNP appreciates their participation in the College and welcomes their applications. We also recognize that applicants from industry may be at a disadvantage compared to their peers in academia in terms of the opportunity to publish research articles. Other standard metrics used to measure success in academia, such as obtaining independent NIH funding, are not as applicable to individuals for industry. In response to a request by Council, we have drafted a guidance statement for the Membership Committee entitled, 'The Critical Role of Industry Membership in the College.' The idea is to provide education and guidance to the Membership Committee when it comes to considering applicants from industry. In addition, there is now a specific form that applicants from industry can use to describe their role in industry research and/or scientific program management.

Dr. Murrough: Are there specific benchmarks that the Membership Committee uses when determining acceptance into the College for applicants for industry?

Dr. Keefe: In some ways, it is a different language that is used to describe success for an industry scientist compared to an academic scientist. Some of the academic members of the Membership Committee were uncertain as to what constitutes success and productivity as an industry scientist, so we reached out to industry members, some of whom had significant experience as academic and industry scientists, to ask them how success criteria between the two differ. So right now, we are making an effort to educate the Membership Committee as to what constitutes a scientifically meaningful contribution in the context of industry research. Industry research is more team oriented, so when it comes to bringing a drug to market, it's not as simple as asking "who was the PI?" since in some cases, hundreds of individuals may have contributed

to that work. The committee has a better understanding of that now, and the new forms used in the application process are designed to help capture that information.

Dr. Murrough: Last question, since I have you here, what is your assessment of the current state of CNS drug discovery today?

Dr. Keefe: Well, it is changing quite a bit. The model of large companies doing all of the discovery and R & D, and bringing a drug to market is changing. More diverse, smaller biotechnology companies are now doing much of the basic and early phase work. Also, the use of technological innovation is increasing, and smaller, agile companies facilitate this. A place like the ACNP is a great environment to bring new ideas together and figure out how we can all benefit. The Membership Committee has been reaching out to scientists working in these areas, which I think is new.

Dr. Murrough: So you are optimistic about the future of neuropsychopharmacology?

Dr. Keefe: Absolutely – it's essential, isn't it? It has been said that a society can be measured by how well it takes care of its most vulnerable, and that would certainly include those with mental illness. These diseases aren't going away any time soon, so our work in this area needs to continue to advance.

Dr. Murrough: Thank you so much for an illuminating discussion. I think this exchange will be informative for all of our membership. Thank you again.

For more information, please see the document: "The Critical Role of Industry Membership in the College," available at <http://www.acnp.org/>