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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BIBLIOMETRICS AND THE CLINICAL FATE OF DRUGS

Dear Sir:

Windsor, in his article, "Using Bibliometric Analysis of Patent Literature for Predicting the Clinical Fate of Developing Drugs",[1] claims that there is a relation between the clinical success of a drug and traits in the literature about this drug. In the aforementioned article he concentrates on patent literature, for which he develops some mathematical techniques. In an earlier article,[2] remarkably enough not cited in the present one, he presented traits in the journal literature, which he related to the clinical success of a drug. Regarding the earlier article, I wrote a "Letter to the Editor"[3] in which apart from some technical objections the question was raised why a relation that could be used for prediction purposes should exist at all. After all, a statistical relation between two sets of figures does not prove anything about the causal relation between the facts behind the sets of figures: one might cause the other, or reverse, or both may be caused by a third one. In the present case, the fate of a drug is determined by the bibliometric traits, or the bibliometric traits are determined by the clinical fate of a drug, or both are determined by some other factor. It is not possible to distinguish between the three possibilities on a statistical basis. In my opinion the bibliometric traits do not determine the fate of a drug, but the opposite is true. In that case the bibliometric traits will be apparent in the literature only after some time, and prediction on this basis is not possible. Thus, if Dr. Windsor wants to prove that such a prediction is possible, he has to prove that bibliometric traits cause the clinical success of a drug. I should be very interested to hear his arguments.

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————————NEWS AND NOTES————————

NEWS ITEMS

TATE RECEIVES COLUMBUS AWARD

Dr. Fred A. Tate, associate director for planning and development at Chemical Abstracts Service, has received the 1980 Columbus Section Award of the American Chemical Society.

The award recognizes Dr. Tate's leadership in introducing computer-based information handling systems and procedures at Chemical Abstracts Service and his contributions in negotiating agreements under which organizations in the United Kingdom, West Germany, France, and Japan share in the financial support of CAS and the use of its data base. The award is sponsored by Ashland Chemical Co.

Dr. Tate received the Skolnik Award of the American Chemical Society's Division of Chemical Information in 1978.

CAS SEARCH ASSISTANCE DESK

Those who wish help or advice in searching Chemical Abstracts Service publications or computer files can now get it through the Search Assistance Desk at CAS.

The desk is staffed by chemists with a thorough knowledge of all CAS publications and files. They will answer questions about how CAS indexing terminology and practices affect searches for references on particular topics or substances in *Chemical Abstracts*, the *CA Search* computer-readable file (including the online chemical dictionary files), and other CAS publications and online computer files.

The Search Assistance Desk is in operation Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern time. It can be reached by calling (614) 421-6940, extension 3209. Written questions may be directed to Search Assistance Desk, Chemical Abstracts Service, P.O. Box 3012, Columbus, OH 43210.

ASIDIC MEETING

The Association of Information and Dissemination Centers (ASIDIC) will be sponsoring its 1980 fall meeting September 22 and 23 in Atlanta, Georgia. This year's conference will center on the theme "The Reuse of Information".

The conference, to be held at the Marriott Hotel, Courtland at International Blvd., Atlanta, will include talks by many recognized speakers on the pros and cons of this important topic. Working groups also will give attendees a chance to explore their own concerns.

For further details and registration information, contact: ASIDIC Secretariat, P.O. Box 8105, Athens, GA 30603, (404) 542-3106.