



## The Art (and Blood Sport) of Psychopharmacology Research: Who Has a Dog in the Fight?

We wish to highlight 2 Letters to the Editor that appear in this issue. Gharabawi et al. provide commentary on an article published in *The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* by Zhong et al. (2006).<sup>1</sup> All of the authors of this letter are employed by companies that have a financial interest in the sales of risperidone. The reply is provided by several of the authors of the article published in the *Journal*, with the particular authors of the response letter (Sweitzer et al.) being employees of another pharmaceutical company, one that sells quetiapine.

The 2 original studies discussed in these letters are both comparator trials of risperidone and quetiapine, with different study designs and funding sources and—no surprise—discordant results (Zhong et al., 2006<sup>1</sup>; Potkin et al., 2006<sup>2</sup>).

Heres et al. (2006)<sup>3</sup> recently reviewed the effects of funding sources on clinical studies that assessed second-generation antipsychotics. They found that a great majority of outcomes in published studies supported by pharmaceutical companies were favorable to the sponsor. Points vulnerable to influence related to dosing, study population criteria, methodology and data analysis, and reporting of results.

As are many treatment studies in psychopharmacology, those discussed in these letters were supported by companies that manufacture and market medications. Of course, such research can provide meaningful data. But a careful reader must ask who may benefit from the findings and read articles with an educated skepticism.

Exchanges such as found in these 2 Letters to the Editor can increase transparency and promote academic debate. Psychiatry and all of Medicine need increased transparency to clarify conflicts of interest and bring balance to the interpretation of clinical research.

### REFERENCES

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3. Heres S, Davis J, Maino K, et al. Why olanzapine beats risperidone, risperidone beats quetiapine, and quetiapine beats olanzapine: an exploratory analysis of head-to-head comparison studies of second-generation antipsychotics. *Am J Psychiatry* 2006;163:185–194

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*See pp. 333–334 for the Letters to the Editor by Gharabawi et al. and Sweitzer et al.*