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Editors' comments on a new trial of activated protein C for persistent septic shock

Received: 18 September 2008
Accepted: 18 September 2008
Published online: 7 October 2008
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This editorial refers to the article available at:
doi:[10.1007/s00134-008-1266-6](https://doi.org/10.1007/s00134-008-1266-6).

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This month's issue of the *Journal* contains a somewhat unusual article and two accompanying editorials [1–3]. The authors of the article are members of the steering committee of an ongoing Eli-Lilly trial on activated protein C for persistent septic shock. They describe a number of steps that have been adopted in order to ensure transparency in disclosing financial conflicts, facilitate comprehension and interpretation of results, minimize possible risks, and maximize eventual benefits for patients. This approach constitutes a new model of academia-industry collaboration.

The importance of the initiative is that the study will or will not confirm the results obtained in a pivotal trial [4] that has evoked bitter controversy over recent years. Such debate is founded on issues of inconsistency in results,

possible risks of treatment, and lack of reproducibility of data [5–12]. Furthermore, Eli-Lilly was criticized for conducting what has been viewed as a carefully targeted advertising campaign [13, 14].

One may reasonably argue that by publishing this article, we in some way promote this new Eli-Lilly-sponsored trial. One may also point out that this could be a subtle way to help recruit subjects into the trial. And it may also appear that *Intensive Care Medicine*, the official journal of the European Society of Intensive Care Medicine, hereby endorses this trial.

However, this is not the case. The *Journal* decided to publish the article and the two editorials for a number of reasons. First of all, the authors clearly state their financial conflicts with the sponsor and outline their relationship with Eli-Lilly in full. Second, our aim is to provide the public and also physicians enrolling subjects into this trial with further scientific background on activated protein C. Third, we wish to emphasize that publication of this article and the investigation protocol (as an electronic supplementary material file) in no way implies an imprimatur by *Intensive Care Medicine*. Fourth, although there is still far to go before we reach an ideal scenario of industry–researcher collaboration, we welcome this unprecedented step forward. And lastly, we believe this trial is fundamental in order to comply with one of the major requirements of medical science: reproducibility.

The novelty here is the full disclosure of the process by which this study was designed, and a description of how it will be conducted, analyzed and reported. We thank the authors, the reviewers and the editorialists for their fair and honest commitment to maintaining the integrity of the editorial process. We hope all this will facilitate rigorous interpretation of the data and will contribute to the dissemination of scientific information that can help clinicians, our readers, to serve better their patients.

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