The translational science movement creates a series of contrasts between traditional and evolving self-identities. Translational science now places expectations on scientists to become specific kinds of leaders with organizational, business, and pedagogical as well as scientific skills. The following is a preliminary inventory of respondents’ perceptions and interpretations of changes in the role of translational scientists and how they relate to their sense of self-identity.

- Some thoughtful scientists are concerned that translational science produces an over-appreciation of rationalistic and organizational pathways to discovery. They fear the possible loss of appreciation for the non-rational, intuitive and personalistic dimensions of discovery. Senior scientists generally voiced this concern.

- The team-research design promotes interdisciplinary collaboration. Nurses in particular celebrate this development. Those nurses who see themselves as scientists, as well as care givers and educators, appreciate the opportunity to operate at a professional level in research, in contrast to a traditional charge to locate tissue and recruit subjects for others’ studies.

- Some scientists were initially concerned that the growing emphasis on the business model would turn them into businesspersons at the expense of their strong self-identity as intellectuals. In interview, they voice the increasing understanding that they do not have to abandon their comfortable and powerful self-identity qua scientist. Instead, their more essential self-identity as smart, bright person empowers them to turn the business side of translational science into simply another body of knowledge and practice to master, a task they increasingly feel comfortable accomplishing.

- The understanding of and appreciation for translational science are enhanced by catering to the scientists’ existing technical and intellectual vocabulary. For example, one scientist brusquely noted that translational science is today’s version of old-fashion “R&D” (i.e., research and development). The increased use of constructive metaphors in everyday conversation to operationalize the team concept (e.g., “network” and “bridge between basic and applied science”) functions to illustrate the aesthetic qualities of team design, similar to the way innovative network visualization illustrates the aesthetic and topological qualities of team membership patterns.4

Interaction of Multidisciplinary Translational Teams

Notes

1 This study was conducted with the support of the Institute for Translational Sciences at the University of Texas Medical Branch, supported in part by a Clinical and Translational Science Award (UL1TR000071) from the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences, National Institutes of Health.  
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