

February 26, 2006
Memo to Group

Hello everybody,

As you know, I have been busy reviewing postdoctoral fellowship applications for the NIH. As part of the application, candidates must provide letters of reference from their mentors. The referees are asked to assign a numerical score (1 - outstanding - upper 5%, 2 - excellent - upper 6 to 20%, 3 - very good - upper 21 to 40%, 4 - good - middle 41 to 60%, 5 fair - lower 40%) in the following categories:

- Research Ability and Potential
- Written and Verbal Communication Skills
- Perseverance in Pursuing Goals
- Self-Reliance and Independence
- Laboratory Skills and Techniques
- Originality
- Accuracy
- Scientific Background
- Familiarity with Research Literature
- Ability to Organize Scientific Data

The competition for these fellowships is very stiff and scores below "1" have a negative connotation. Scores of "3" are viewed as a definite problem.

I am sharing this information with you because I want you to realize how young scientists are being judged in our system. You will recognize that I spend a lot of time urging you (with good reason) to excel in these very same categories. I think that each of you has the POTENTIAL to be a "1" in every category. However, everybody has room for self improvement. Excellence cannot be forced upon you. You must have the innate desire to excel and succeed.

Please keep these thoughts in mind.

Your caring mentor,

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