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Response to Grading of the commercial optical biosensor literature—Class of 2008

Over the last 4 years, I have been reading the commercial optical biosensor literature reviews written by Rich and Myszkowski and each successive year I feel that another great synthesis of experimental design and data interpretation is presented. As someone who instructs in the field of biosensors, I have found these reviews to be helpful teaching tools to new users providing guidelines and rules needed to prepare exceptional quality data worth publishing. This year's review was no exception. While I have not read the majority of the articles described in these annual reviews, I did notice that a significant quantity of the articles that are discussed have poorly presented or misinterpreted data. That being said, I find that these reviews play a useful role to help improve the quality of literature published by the biosensor community as a whole.

In this year's review, I was surprised to see that the literature was being graded. I initially considered that the grading of articles was somewhat taboo even if valid. A few years back when I attended the ACS national meeting in Chicago, I witnessed a near fist-fight when a German biochemist politely questioned the work of a group who could not explain an anomaly that the German chemist was familiar with. The explanation that he presented was simple, and did invalidate the group's claims. His intention was good since he only wanted to test the strength of the claim that was being made. When reading through the latest biosensor review, I thought that the intention of the authors was

essentially the same. However, unlike most review articles, I found myself laughing at the terminology such as "hate-constants" describing incorrectly reported kinetic constants where no model fitting to experimental data was shown. It was certainly written with a playful yet instructive tone reminiscent of Lionel Raff. It seemed to me that this article was not written to offend, but rather to inspire and encourage the production of accurate, quality data. Questioning the results of a study is how progress is achieved.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading the article and took from it an indirect criticism which allowed my own quality of work to be improved. I was able to discuss the topics presented in the article with my co-workers and it produced an open dialogue between us which helped to strengthen the interpretation of our data. I greatly appreciate the Rich and Myszkowski reviews of biosensor literature and hope to see them continue. I also hope that the entire biosensor community can benefit from group discussions in the same fashion as I have been able to do. The validity and quality of our work is important to all our colleagues who work in the same field and this requires that we use our experimental techniques in the best possible way.

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