

Free speech for thee but not for me

Scott Gottlieb, MD

The Problem

- Two standards of speech
- Government financing of research deliberately tilts the landscape toward the government
- At the same time restrictions are deliberately increased when it comes to commercial actors
- And the government acquires the means to actively influence people with its research

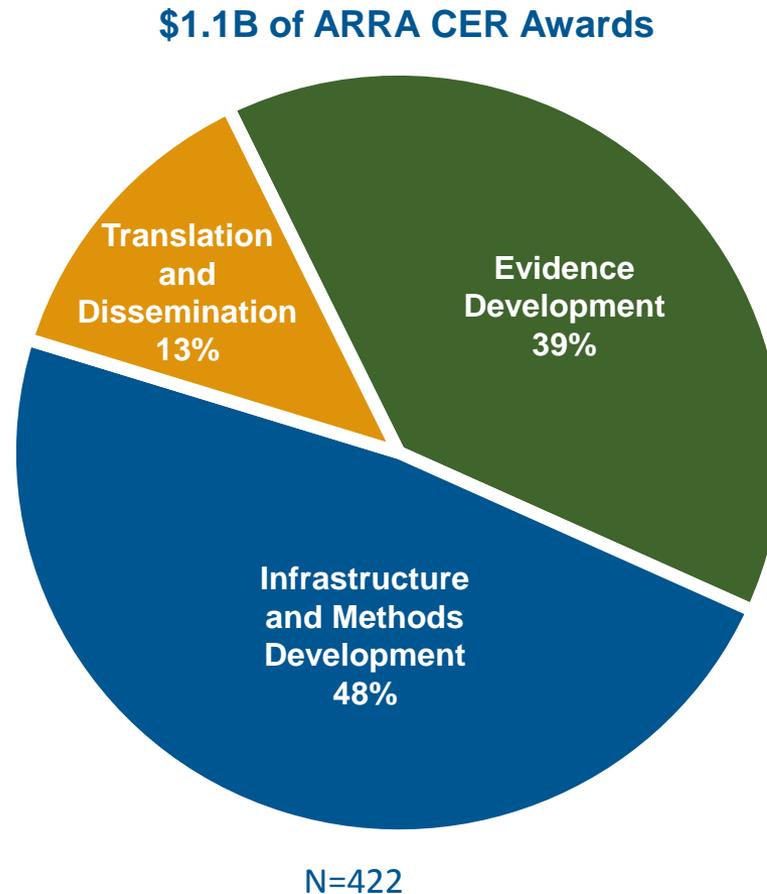
The Problem

- AHRQ and PCORI have an enormous PR budget
- AHRQ gets a 20 percent cut of what PCORI raises through a surcharge on everyone's health premiums (nearly a billion over ten years)
- For a few, this was a deliberate effort to empower government at expense of private actors, but....
- It's sort of Orwellian. This is not what most intended

Scope of Promotion

- NIH spent \$3.7 million and used over 150 physician educators to disseminate ALLHAT findings and recommend that physicians prescribe less expensive diuretics as a first-line therapy over three years
- As of October 2010, AHRQ has awarded 5 grants for a program on academic detailing and the “communication of CER results physicians”. Program is supported by \$29.5 million in ARRA funding
- Among the appropriations: Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide, Healthcare Division, \$18 million to create a publicity center, another \$8.6 million to create regional dissemination centers
- PCORI is expected to receive between \$4 and \$5 billion in funding between 2010 and 2019, 25% will go toward for promotional activities
- AHRQ will be primary outlet for PCORI's research and tools, and will get 20% of PCORI's funding; expected to reach \$500 million by 2015

13% of total current \$1.1B ARRA CER award already went toward CER translation and dissemination



ARRA-Funded Academic Detailing Programs Represent a Key Feature of CER Translation and Dissemination Efforts

In 2010, AHRQ awarded 5 grants for academic detailing²

- In March 2010, AHRQ announced a 3-year academic detailing program to improve provider knowledge of medical treatment effectiveness by encouraging alignment of practices with established evidence (AHRQ CER products and tools)

Award Type	Award Recipient	Amount	Award Description
Academic Detailing	Total Therapeutic Management	\$11.7 million	Academic detailing program to put into practice AHRQ CER tools; only award specifically intended for physician outreach
Publicity Center	Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide	\$18 million	Awardee will disseminate CER findings and encourage their use in healthcare decision-making
Regional Dissemination Centers	Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide	\$8.6 million	Contractor will expand AHRQ CER activities at the regional, state and local levels
Continuing Education	Prime Education, Inc.	\$4 million	Online continuing education program to provide clinicians with CER findings from AHRQ's Effective Health Care Program
Evaluation	IMPAQ International	\$2.4 million	Awardee will conduct formal evaluation of the Academic Detailing program

ARRA: American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, CER: Comparative effectiveness research, AHRQ: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality,

PCORI: Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute, CER: Comparative effectiveness research

Source: Avalere EBM Navigator.

1. U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging press release (April 15, 2010). <http://aging.senate.gov/record.cfm?id=323890>

The arguments for change

- Need to make sure we maintain proper incentives to conduct this kind of research
- Economics 101: efficiencies and savings are created by robust information environments
- Government actors also have incentives and motivations and can't be fully trusted either
- Critics will never trust industry data, but someone needs to show it has rigor and value

Some Remedies

- Create a uniform standard in legislation or guidance for dissemination of comparative studies ("substantial clinical experience")
- Create a safe harbor in FDA guidance for CER representations made to purchasers
- Create cross-agency rules for how bottom line research results get promulgated by Feds and the content and conduct of "academic detailing"
- Bring a definitive First Amendment challenge to restrictions that's appealed to the Supreme Court

Further Reading

Comparative Effectiveness Research: The Need for a Uniform Standard, Scott Gottlieb, Coleen Klasmeier, June 09, 2009

<http://www.aei.org/outlook/health/healthcare-reform/comparative-effectiveness-research-the-need-for-a-uniform-standard/>

