

## **CASE STUDY # 1: An Extramural Scientist with Significant Intramural Responsibilities**

*Dr. Jones is a senior member of the extramural staff of the NIBIB. She reports to the Director of Extramural Activities, who signs her timecard and provides performance ratings. While Dr. Jones' responsibilities do not include managing a scientific portfolio, she attends meetings convened to discuss programs and funding decisions. She also has access to summary statements and grant applications. Dr. Jones provides information at these meetings based on her scientific expertise and the nature of her responsibilities. When she was hired, an established "firewall" restricted Dr. Jones from being involved in decisions related to funding or general program management because she also has an active intramural research program with a number of collaborations. She has a separate operating budget for this activity from the NIBIB intramural program and she reports secondarily to an intramural Lab Chief for this part of her job. Dr. Jones publishes widely and is now often invited to present her work at national and international meetings and at research institutions. The extramural programs of the NIBIB support many of the research institutions and programs to which she is invited. Because of limited travel dollars available to her through her laboratory budget, she requests approval of sponsored travel, which is reviewed by the Lab Chief.*

*Does the firewall established when Dr. Jones was hired sufficiently protect her and the NIBIB from conflicts of interest and the perception that Dr. Jones has an unfair advantage due to her knowledge of her colleagues' and potential competitors' research plans?*

Perhaps, the most important key to managing this potential conflict is training Dr. Jones to ensure she has a clear understanding of the issues and is sensitive to their complexity. A variation of the conflict of interest/confidentiality agreement used for peer reviewers might be appropriate to document the issues and evidence that Dr. Jones is aware of them. This is a complex situation, since Dr. Jones, officially an extramural scientist administrator, is not just working in someone's intramural laboratory, but in fact is immersed in intramural research and has her own lab with intramural staff (technicians, post-docs) reporting to her. Yet, she needs access to confidential information to perform her extramural responsibilities. The established firewall may be sufficient but it would be advisable to make Dr. Jones aware of potential issues and to continue monitoring the situation.

*What about her collaborators—is there a conflict when it comes to any discussion about them, and would this be personal or institutional?*

It should be made clear to Dr. Jones and others on the staff that she has no role in allocating extramural funds or making administrative decisions after award. It would also be appropriate for her to refrain from any internal discussion related to her collaborators or their work within the extramural staff context. Her extramural supervisor should periodically review these collaborations with Dr. Jones. Under most circumstances, the conflicts would be with the individual collaborators. However, there may be some circumstances in which at least a perception of conflict may extend to the collaborator's laboratory or institution. These should be managed, as appropriate, with the DEA director.

*What about sponsored travel? Is it appropriate for Dr. Jones to accept sponsored travel? Consider the issue in light of the following:*

- 1. The differentiation between extramural and intramural staff and the practices the NIBIB has put in place regarding Dr. Jones are not apparent to extramural investigators.*
- 2. Extramural staff cannot accept sponsored travel from an institution that is or potentially is an applicant/grantee.*

The sponsored travel requires that the DEA Director, as the official supervisor:

1. Review and initial the request;

2. Remind Dr. Jones of the need to limit her presentation strictly to the research from her laboratory;
3. Avoid any discussion of grants or applications; and
4. Ensure that the sponsor of the travel is not a grantee institution within the NIBIB portfolio. Travel to grantee institutions should only be covered with intramural funds for sharing her research findings.

As a final note, different controls would be necessary if the extramural responsibilities were in programmatic management or in review. In that case, such extensive intramural involvement may not be permissible.