

New study analyzes barriers to cancer research commercialization

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A new study led by the University of Kentucky Markey Cancer Center Assistant Director for Research Nathan Vanderford cites a combination of factors that prevent academic-based cancer research faculty from ultimately commercializing their work.

According to the Association of University Technology Managers, academic institutions have been collectively generating more than \$2 billion in commercialization income over the last several years. Despite this significant commercialization activity, studies have shown that academic institutions face challenges to commercializing their innovations. Identifying and adjusting for these challenges can further boost academic-based research commercialization, thus having significant benefits for universities and consumers.

Published in *PLOS One*, Vanderford's study utilized an electronic survey sent to faculty at the University of Kentucky with questions addressing general barriers inhibiting [cancer research](#) commercialization and whether mitigation of the barriers could potentially enhance faculty engagement in commercialization activities.

Through the survey, faculty cited a number of barriers to moving research products into the market, including the expense and time involved, the lack of infrastructure for the process, and the lack of industry partnerships.

Additionally, survey respondents noted that alleviating these factors as

well as revising university policies/procedures, risk mitigation, more emphases on commercialization by academia research field, and increased information on how to commercialize could potentially increase commercialization activity. Further statistical analysis indicated that a significant increase in commercialization activity would likely only occur when multiple barriers were mitigated.

"This study suggests that the barriers inhibiting cancer [research commercialization](#) at UK are, by in large, no different than the barriers that prevent commercialization at any academic institution," Vanderford said. "I believe we have to understand these challenges and devise ways to overcome them to avoid situations where important innovations sit dormant in universities. It would be a shame for a revolutionarily effective [cancer](#) treatment to never make it to patients because the barriers to the [commercialization](#) process prevent it from moving outside the walls of academia."

Though the UK study was focused on a single population of researchers, Vanderford notes that his study fits into a much broader international discussion on what role universities should play in commercializing innovation that is derived from academic-based research. The dissenting argument is that universities should focus on the pursuit of general, basic knowledge versus being influenced by real or potential consumer-driven market demands.

More information: www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0072268

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