

The People's Choice Award

The People's Choice Award recognizes trainees who present posters to non-scientists in an engaging and accessible manner.

Judging is done by patient advocates or other members of the public who have an interest in cancer research, but are not cancer researchers themselves.

The People's Choice Award may be the only award given at a poster session, or it can be given *in addition* to an award that evaluates the scientific merits of posters (which are typically judged by faculty or other scientists).

Procedure

- The posters should be divided so that no advocate visits more than ten. The division is often based on content, and then on numbers. For example, Nanotechnology Posters 1-9, Nanotechnology Posters 10-19, Cell Metabolism Posters 1-9, and so forth.
- Advocates should work in pairs. One pair will visit Nanotechnology Posters 1-9, a second pair will visit Nanotechnology 10-19, etc.
- Each pair of advocates will visit their assigned posters and talk with the trainees. They often begin by saying, "We're patient advocates – not scientists - and would like to hear about your research. Can you walk us through your poster in about five minutes?"
- After visiting their assigned posters, each pair of advocates will select a favorite based on the criteria listed below.
- All of the advocate judges then meet together and share with each other which posters/trainees were their favorites and why. (These favorite posters can be thought of as the semifinalists.)
- All of the advocate judges then split up and visit each of the semifinalists (i.e., the ones they didn't visit initially), and listen to each trainee present his or her work.
- The advocate judges meet again and select the overall winner.

Judging criteria

- Is the trainee standing near the poster and appear welcoming?
- Does the trainee seem interested and enthusiastic about sharing his or her work with you?
- Does the trainee provide some context for the research, or do they begin with the details of his or her specific project? That is, does the trainee say why the research is important?
- Does the trainee use language that a non-scientist is likely to understand?
- Does the trainee recognize when you don't understand and attempt to make it clearer?
- Does the trainee generally keep within the five-minute time frame?
- Does the trainee welcome questions and answer them?
- Does the trainee's presentation make you want to learn more about the research?

General comments

- Given the short time-frame for judging, we've found that informal criteria as described above work better than a formal rubric with points assigned in different categories. Advocates generally have a gut feeling for which poster/trainee is their favorite.
- It's generally easier if advocates work in pairs when visiting the posters. One can be asking a question while the other is looking at the poster and formulating the next question.
- It's wonderful to be able to present a cash award (e.g., \$100), a certificate, or other lasting memento that recognizes the trainee and encourages other trainees to think about the importance of communicating with the public.

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