In the Jungle

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The male African lion (*Panthera leo*) is viewed as the “King” of the jungle. A species with no natural predator, adult lions sit atop the food chain and roam the plains or savannas of Africa hunting prey. The lions are happy and well fed as long as they have high grass to hide in and sufficient prey to hunt. In the absence of predators, the life span of a male lion is limited only by contacts with humans, starvation attacks from other lions, and disease. But the male lion shares a surprising feature with other animals including polar bears, rats, pigs, bank voles, house finches, beetles, wolf spiders, and many species of fish—it eats its young. For lions, infanticide takes place as a result of the fierce competition among males for a position of leadership in the social structure of lions, which is called a pride. A male lion or group of male lions who takes over a pride has approximately 2 years before being replaced by a younger and stronger group of lions. By killing the unweaned cubs of the defeated males, the new leaders of the pride can ensure that they will be able to father offspring of females who would have been unavailable to them if their cubs had survived and they had continued nursing.

For a long time investigators have tried to understand the social and biological underpinning of infanticide. Some species appear to eat their young during periods of starvation so that they can live to breed again in the future. Other species eat slower growing infants in order to limit the amount of time they have to spend caring for the young and enabling the males to reenter the mating game sooner. The parent's energy is also conserved for subsequent batches of young. Pigs eat their young—but only when they are severely stressed. And some animals may consume their young to gain a food source. It remains unclear whether infanticide is an adaptive or maladaptive phenomenon for the survival of the species; yet it seems that competition and stress increase the amount of infanticide in any population.

So why address infanticide in this journal. Over the past few years I have heard increasingly of instances where mentors have taken advantage of trainees and junior faculty members. The levels of abuse differed: in some cases they involved a “mentor” using a trainee's data in a grant or publication without attribution while in other situations trainees were “indentured” because the mentor held the promise of a “green card.” In some cases the “mentor” had so many grants, they had no predators - even deans approached

them with caution. While the stories I have heard from both colleagues and trainees are admittedly anecdotal, they are none the less disturbing. As the competition for grants increases, so too will the drive to eat one's young. Of even greater concern is the fact that a single event of infanticide in an institution provides a “hidden curriculum” for the other “cubs” - what we preach is often not what we do.

In this issue of Clinical and Translational Science, Karin Silet and colleagues present the results of an important and timely survey of mentoring programs for K-scholars across the Clinical Translational Science Awards consortium. This manuscript represents the first of a series of papers that will detail the work product of the “mentor working group” of the CTSA Education Key Function Committee. It details the various ways in which CTSA's help trainees select mentors, communicate expectations, measure the success of mentoring relationships, and provide mentors with support and training. The first comprehensive survey of mentoring programs among the 46 universities awarded CTSA's, this document provides important baseline data upon which future work will rest. Subsequent white papers will provide national consensus statements to guide the mentoring programs that will encourage and train the next generation of clinical and translational investigators.

In these important deliberations, I hope that the CTSA Education Key Function Committee and the mentoring work

group will recognize that it is not uncommon to find lions lying in the tall grasses of academia ready to eat a young cub. This threat will become heightened unless our

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economic environment improves and NIH funding is increased as competition and infanticide are clearly linked. Trainees and young faculty members must have “safe harbors,” where they can freely and confidentially seek guidance when the behavior of their mentors is inappropriate. The Education Key Function Committee must provide guidelines for chairpersons and deans who may face the political stress of balancing what is right against the internal politics and fiscal realities of today's academic medical centers. When their institutions fail them, trainees must have an outside arbiter or ombudsperson to whom they can go with complaints and concerns, and the role of that ombudsperson should be clearly articulated to the CTSA trainees. The ombudsperson should have a direct reporting relationship with senior leaders at the NIH who can adjudicate the trainee's concerns and unequivocally stop the practice of academic infanticide. If we continue to eat our young, we will eventually reach a point at which careers in research are no longer sustainable. **CTS**

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DOI: 10.1111/j.1752-8062.2010.00241.x