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The Treatment Research Institute (TRI) released the Risk and Needs Triage, "RANT™," a science-based product promoting rational sentencing of low level, drug involved offenders to community based correctional settings.

Designed to help judges make scientifically informed rehabilitative and cost-effective sentencing decisions, the tool exemplifies TRI's practice of bringing science within easy reach of policy makers and practitioners in addiction and substance use.

"Researchers must be able to translate findings into useful forms that help people who have enormous influence over addiction/substance use policy or practice, but who operate under time constraints, cost burdens or other strict limitations," said A. Thomas McLellan, Ph.D., TRI's chief executive. "Introducing science-based products that are simple to use but compelling by their impact, and save the user time and/or money, is one of the ways researchers can expedite quality improvement in the addiction field," he said.

The [web enabled RANT](#) illustrates the point. The product is a decision support tool built around an empirically derived but quick and easy-to-administer screening (most correctional officials can administer it in under 15 minutes with minimal training). Using a series of algorithms programmed into the module, individual offenders are electronically sorted into one of four "risk/need" quadrants based on their assessed level of criminogenic risk (e.g., repeated criminal activity, prior treatment failures) and clinical need (e.g., drug or alcohol dependence or mental illness).

The product then automatically generates simple, jargon-free reports for judges, who can even view them from the bench where feasible. The reports suggest the level of supervision and/or treatment most likely to produce the best outcomes for each offender.

The product is useful but has another important attribute according to Douglas Marlowe, J.D., Ph.D., lead RANT creator. "RANT serves the broader goal of potentially reducing recidivism and drug-involved crime through data-informed sentencing," Marlowe said.

"RANT may also help judges reserve the costlier placements for the offenders shown to need and most likely to benefit from them, not insignificant when citizens are demanding protection and public dollars are in such short supply," McLellan noted.

But it's the product's fidelity to research that gives it the TRI signature according to both scientists. RANT is based on research, much of it from Marlowe and TRI co-developer David Festinger, Ph.D., showing that high-risk offenders have the best outcomes when closely supervised by judges or correctional officials, and that high-need offenders do best when community based treatment is the priority. Alternatively, some offenders require a combination of strict supervision and treatment, such as drug courts.

"By 'triaging' offenders based on individualized assessment data, RANT suggests a pathway that allows judges to choose the community-based placement most closely conforming to the risk/needs profile," Marlowe said.

The Risk and Needs Triage is neither the first nor the last science derived product to be introduced by the Philadelphia-based TRI, a research organization noted for translation of cutting edge research to help non-scientists like policy makers and practitioners. Several more court products are under development, as is a system to help counselors monitor patients' treatment progress - and to make mid-course corrections when suggested by the data.

"The change agents in the addiction and substance use field with the most direct impact are not scientists - they're the people who make the funding and service decisions or who come into direct contact with the clients," McLellan said. "Science can point the way for these agents, providing we make the findings relevant, simple and useful to them."