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## Unique properties of botulinum toxins

This session of the TOXINS2008 conference was organized with the aim to provide an open forum in which similarities and differences between the various botulinum toxin (BoNT) preparations are highlighted and discussed. To this end the organizers invited representatives of the manufactures of the four commercially available BoNT products, Botox, Dysport, Xeomin, Myobloc/Neurobloc, to briefly summarize what unique properties they believe differentiate their products from the other products.

After a full disclosure of relationships to the pharmaceutical company, each presenter was allowed an equal opportunity and the same amount of time (25 min) to state his case. Each presentation was followed by questions and answers from the audience, after which time the representatives were given an opportunity to ask each other questions. After the congress each presenter was provided with the transcript of presentations and of the general discussion and was asked to edit the presentation, but not to expand the content beyond what they presented during the session. The presenters were also allowed to cite not more than 5 peer-reviewed references to supplement their presentations and to provide 3 figures from their slide presentations.

Despite these guidelines, which were intended to provide as much fairness as possible, the audience and the reader should understand and the organizers fully acknowledge that the presentations were probably biased

in favor of the individual product. The editors reviewed the manuscripts for style but intentionally did not edit the content of the submitted summaries. Although the primary goal of this session was to educate, the readers should decide for themselves whether the presented data are valid and credible.

The editors believe that this structured approach allowed to highlight similarities and differences among four biological compounds that are not directly equivalent, but have overlapping indications and comparable mechanisms of action. The presentations and the discussion raise very important issues that need to be addressed by independent scientific research. The lively interactive discussion provided some new, otherwise not readily available, information helping to compare the commercially available BoNTs. The organizers believe that the session achieved its primary intent – a forum for debated scientific and clinical problems related to the use of BoNTs.

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