

Video: Alexander Chernyakhovsky of Mason, OH and Amrita Sehgal of Woodside, CA Each Win \$50,000 Scholarship in National Science Competition



Alexander Chernyakhovsky wins \$50K in YES Competition by College Board & RWJF.
(PRNewsFoto/College Board, Mike Busada)

WASHINGTON, DC UNITED STATES



Amrita Sehgal Wins \$50,000 in YES Competition Sponsored by College Board & RWJF.
(PRNewsFoto/College Board, Mike Busada)

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Projects on Avian Influenza Vaccine and Teenage Osteoporosis Prevention Earn Top Honors in YES Competition

WASHINGTON, April 21 /PRNewswire/ -- **Alexander Chernyakhovsky**, 17, a junior at **William Mason High School** and **Amrita Sehgal**, 18, a senior at **Menlo-Atherton High School** were each awarded a \$50,000 college scholarship in the Young Epidemiology Scholars (YES) Competition, sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and administered by the College Board.

(Photo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20090421/NY02252-a>)

(Photo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20090421/NY02252-b>)

To view the Multimedia News Release, go to: <http://www.prnewswire.com/mnr/YES/37883/>

Alexander and Amrita were among 60 high school students selected out of more than 560 entrants nationwide to present their projects to a panel of top epidemiologists at the competition in Washington D.C., at which nearly \$500,000 in scholarships were awarded.

"The YES Competition is one of the nation's most prestigious science competitions for high school students," said Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., M.B.A, president and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "Alexander's and Amrita's impressive work demonstrates that a new generation of epidemiologists is emerging, which holds great promise for improving the health of our nation."

The YES Competition is designed to spur students' interest in the field of public health, specifically epidemiology. Epidemiology explores patterns of disease, illness and injury within populations with the goal of developing methods for prevention, control and treatment to improve health.

Students develop a research question and hypothesis about a health issue that concerns a group or groups of people, and then conduct research to analyze the subject and suggest potential ways to improve the problem based on their analysis.

ALEXANDER CHERNYAKHOVSKY

Broad coverage of the bird flu outbreak in 2006 was the source of inspiration for Alexander's study, "Global Epidemiological Analysis of Avian Influenza Viruses in Humans." Alexander uses computer-based modeling and simulation to predict the next areas of infection of humans with avian influenza and the timelines for outbreaks. His YES study focused on the potential application of the forecasts of his model to the World Health Organization process of selecting the three strains of influenza included in the flu vaccine each year.

Alexander began to develop his computer simulation model shortly after the first avian influenza outbreak. He has progressively added data and features such as the tracking of migrating waterfowl, stationary waterfowl, and poultry to determine the routes by which avian influenza infection can spread. Due to the sophistication and complexity of his model, Alexander runs his bio-simulations at the Ohio Supercomputer Center.

AMRITA SEHGAL

While working/volunteering at the Institute of Clinical Outcomes Research and Education (ICORE) in Palo Alto, CA, Amrita wondered if teenagers like her were taking enough calcium to help them prevent osteoporosis later in their lives. Her study, "Can We Start the War Against Osteoporosis Early? Are Teenagers Taking Enough Calcium?" found that only 38 percent of students in her study met the requirement for the daily recommended calcium intake, with just 20 percent of girls and 52 percent of boys participating in the study meeting the daily recommended intake. Her study also found that teenagers got less calcium in their diet as they got older. Amrita believes her results show a need for increased health education among teenagers to promote the importance of calcium intake.

"The YES Competition is designed to encourage students to explore careers in public health and epidemiology, but we know it does much more than that," said College Board President Gaston Caperton. "Alexander and Amrita addressed national and global health issues and we congratulate them. We look forward to seeing the outcomes of their hard work in the future."

For more information, to interview finalists or to speak with a YES spokesperson, please contact Matthew Windsor at mwindsor@lipmanhearn.com or Colleen McGraw at cmcgraw@lipmanhearn.com, or by phone at 202-457-8100. For more information about the YES Competition, visit www.collegeboard.com/YES.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

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