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Drug Marketers Use Social Network Diagrams to Help Locate Influential Doctors

Consulting companies like Activate Networks create social network diagrams to help pharmaceutical marketers identify prescribing histories and relationships among doctors. Such diagrams can help marketers pinpoint highly connected physicians, the best potential targets for marketing.

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Doctors based in a Northeastern U.S. community who have prescribed, or are potential customers for, an oncology drug.

Each circle represents one doctor.

- RELEVANT SPECIALISTS: Red circle
- OTHER DOCTORS: Blue circle
- Has not prescribed the drug being surveyed: Light blue circle
- Has prescribed the drug being surveyed: Dark blue circle

- PREScribing VOLUME FOR ANY ONCOLOGY DRUG: Low, Medium, High (circle size)

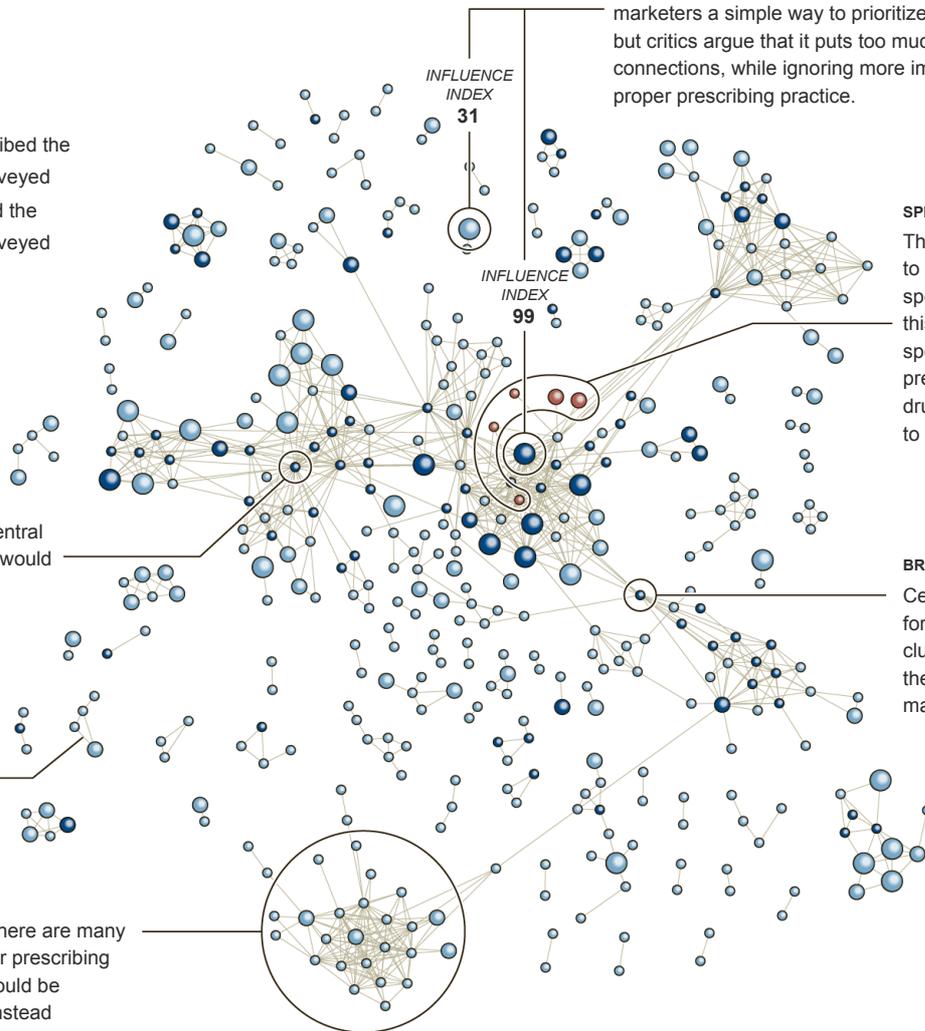
POSITIONING
Although currently a low-volume prescriber, this doctor is in a key central position to sway others. Marketers would be likely to single him out.

CONNECTIONS
mean that doctors share more than a certain number of relevant patients in common — patients whose condition could make them potential users of the drug being surveyed.

PRIORITIZING
In a complex cluster like this one, there are many interrelated physicians, all at similar prescribing levels. A marketer may decide it would be inefficient to prioritize all of them, instead pinpointing only a few.

INFLUENCE INDEX

The software can assign each doctor an "influence index" based on his or her connectedness to others. This gives marketers a simple way to prioritize their potential targets, but critics argue that it puts too much emphasis on social connections, while ignoring more important values like proper prescribing practice.



SPECIALISTS
The software allows users to highlight relevant specialists with color. In this example, none of the specialists have yet prescribed the featured drug, so marketers may try to sway them.

BRIDGES
Certain physicians seem to form key links between clusters. That could make them good targets for marketers.

Source: Activate Networks