

Irish Council for Bioethics
Comhairle Bitheitice na hÉireann

Minutes for Council Meeting
Thursday 11th September 2003

- In the Chair:** Professor P. Fottrell
- Also present:** Dr D. Gleeson; Professor P. Whittaker; Professor P. Cunningham; Mr M. Dempsey; Dr M. Fitzgerald; Dr P. Flanagan; Mr K. Kearon; Professor C. Kelleher; Dr M. Lawler; Dr T. McGleenan; Ms M. Mulvihill; Professor A. Scott; Professor S. Strain.
- Apologies for absence:** Dr D. Dooley; Professor P. Hannon; Mr P. McKenna; Dr N. O'Brien; Professor F. O'Gara; Professor R. O'Regan; Mr A. Sheikh.
- Also in attendance:** Dr S. O'Sullivan

1. Minutes

The minutes of the previous Council meeting held on 12th June 2003, were adopted.

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising that were already listed on the agenda.

3. Report from the Scientific Director

Dr. O'Sullivan reported that she represented the Irish Council for Bioethics at the first meeting of the National Bioethics Commissions of Europe in Athens held on the 24th and 25th June 2003. The National Bioethics Committees were meeting in order to discuss potential areas of collaboration and to exchange information. The next meeting will be held in Rome on 19th December 2003. Dr. O'Sullivan informed that Council that the EU Commission had requested that the Irish Council for Bioethics would organise a meeting for May 2004 to coincide with the Irish Presidency.

Dr. O'Sullivan informed that Council that the Medical Council had requested a meeting that should take place during October, in order to discuss areas of common interest.

The Council was informed that a request had been received for funding to support a symposium being organised by the Philosophy Department Centre of Bioethical Research and Analysis in N.U.I. Galway on the issues of

genetics and disability. The conference is to be held at N.U.I. Galway on 10th to 12th March 2004. The Council agreed to support this academic conference.

The Council was informed that the Ethics and Eating Conference planned for Spring of 2004 was progressing well. It was decided by the organising committee that the items of the conference would be genetically modified food and obesity. In addition there would be lectures on the issues of food and public trust and the impact of first world agricultural policies on developing countries.

Dr. O'Sullivan confirmed that a number of speakers were being considered with respect to a public lecture scheduled for Spring, 2004.

4. Report from the Chairperson of the GM Working Group

Professor Peter Whittaker informed the Council that the GM Working Group had prepared a number of submissions based on the framework document tabled at the previous meeting. Discussions include the health implications of genetically modified crops, their impact on the environment and the use of GM crops in developing countries. Professor Whittaker reported that the group would meet in the afternoon of the 11th September to discuss the means by which the public would be consulted.

5. Report from the Chairperson of the Biological Materials Working Group

Professor Mark Lawler informed the Council that the work of the Biological Material Working Group was progressing well. He reported that the public consultation process had gone well and that a number of submissions had been received by the group. Following the closing date of the submission process on 12th September, the group would carefully consider these submissions before formulating recommendations.

6. Report from the Ethics Committee Working Group

Professor Cecily Kelleher informed the Council that the Ethics Committee Working Group were back in operation following the suspension of the groups activities during the Summer as a result of the public health doctors' strike. The group had been engaging with the relevant bodies and were confident that a set of recommendation for the structure and operation of ethics committee would be available to the Council before the end of the year. Once this document was ready the group intended to hold a consultation process with interested parties such as the Department of Health, Irish Medicines Board, funding bodies and ethics committees themselves.

It was agreed that all reports and opinion documents produced by the Council should have a similar format. This would include an executive summary, recommendations where appropriate, followed by the main body of text. Documents would also contain appendices and glossaries where necessary.

7. Any Other Business

The Chair of the Council, Professor Patrick Fottrell announced that he had been recently appointed as Chair of Science Foundation Ireland. Due to a potential conflict of interest, Professor Fottrell regretfully announced that he would be stepping down as the Chair of the Irish Council for Bioethics. The Council were informed that the Royal Irish Academy, in consultation with them would appoint a new chair to the Council before the next Council meeting of 11th December 2003.

8. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Council will take place at **10.30am on Thursday, 11th December 2003 at the Royal Irish Academy.**

Dates for Council Meetings in 2004

March 11th 2004, at 10.30am at the Royal Irish Academy

June 10th 2004, at 10.30am at the Royal Irish Academy

September 9th 2004, at 10.30am at the Royal Irish Academy

December 9th 2004, at 10.30am at the Royal Irish Academy
