

Irish Council for Bioethics
Comhairle Bitheitice na hÉireann

Minutes of Council Meeting
Thursday 15th June 2006

In the Chair: Mr Dermot Gleeson

Present: Dr Dolores Dooley; Professor Andrew Green; Prof. Linda Hogan; Dr Richard Hull; Dr. Peter McKenna; Professor John Vincent McLoughlin; Mr Stephen McMahon; Professor Cliona O'Farrelly; Dr Darina O'Flanagan; Professor Richard O'Kennedy; Dr David Smith.

Apologies for absence: Mr Conor Brady; Dr Alan Donnelly; Mr Asim Sheikh.

Also present: Dr Siobhán O'Sullivan; Ms Emily de Grae; Dr Stephanie Dyke; Mr Paul Ivory.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were adopted and signed.

2. Report from the scientific director

Dr Siobhán O'Sullivan informed the Council that she gave two lectures on the science and ethics of stem cells to the MS Society of Ireland the Irish Skeptics Society.

Dr O'Sullivan informed members that she and Ms Emily de Grae had prepared a proposal for a web-based education package for transition year students. Dr O'Sullivan told members that the National Council for Curriculum Assessment (NCCA) had expressed an interest in initiating web based projects into second-level education and had requested a meeting with Dr O'Sullivan and Ms de Grae to discuss their proposal. Dr O'Sullivan told members about the secretariat's proposal to include a permanent ethics exhibition in Ireland's planned science center, The Exploration Station. She informed members that a meeting had been arranged with the Exploration Station to discuss the proposal.

Ms de Grae spoke to the Council regarding the proposed playwriting competition. She informed members of the informative meeting she had had with the literary Officer at Fishamble Theatre Company, who had agreed to act as advisor/collaborator in the

project should it be approved. Following a brief discussion on the importance of setting a strict brief for entrants and ensuring that the resulting play give a balanced presentation of issues, Council members approved the project.

Dr. Stephanie Dyke gave a presentation on the Council's updated website and Council Extranet. All agreed that the new website was extremely attractive and user friendly. Dr Dyke informed members that there was a facility to have a reader poll, which would be uploaded once the feature to record comments was perfected. Dr Dyke also asked members to kindly inform her of any news or conferences they might want added to the website.

3. Advance Directive Report

Dr Peter McKenna gave a summary of the work done by the rapporteurs and secretariat since the last meeting. Dr McKenna spoke about stakeholder meetings, submissions from interested organisations and the group's meeting with the Nationaler Ethikrat (German Bioethics Council) in Berlin, all of which he said would be extremely beneficial to the Council's deliberations. Dr McKenna stated that a number of key issues recurred during all meetings such as; the legal status of advance directives, how detailed they should be, how well informed persons can really be about future illness and the role and status of proxies. Members agreed that these issues would all have to be addressed in order for the final report to make a significant contribution to the advance directive debate.

The point was raised that the introduction to the report should set out clearly the scope of the document. Mr. Paul Ivory informed members that he would have a first draft of the report ready for Council's consideration at the September meeting.

Dr O'Sullivan gave a presentation to members on the public consultation on Advance directives, which included an overview of advertising and publicity as well as a break down of the most recent web-based results (291 responses at time of meeting). Dr O'Sullivan informed members that once the survey was closed she would amalgamate the results of both paper and electronic responses and append them to the final report.

4. Infectious Disease Conference

Dr Darina O'Flanagan, representing the infectious disease project rapporteurs, informed Council that it had been decided that the group would run a one-day conference in October on the topic and publish proceedings rather than writing a report. Dr O'Flanagan told members that the group would be meeting after today's Council meeting to discuss the programme and suggest speakers for the event. It was agreed that Dr O'Flanagan would contact the Influenza Pandemic Expert group to seek their participation in the conference.

5. Any Other Business

Dr O'Sullivan addressed members regarding the minutes of the NEC meeting in Vienna (March 2006). She informed members that the NEC discussion primarily focused on UNESCO's recently published *Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights*, the issue of stem cell research, and the question of engaging the public regarding

bioethical issues. Dr. O' Sullivan reported that she had presented the Council's out-reach programme to the NEC members who regarded the Council's work as an example of good practice in this area. Dr O'Sullivan stressed the importance of the NEC forum in fostering links with other Bioethics Councils such as the Nationaler Ethikrat (German Bioethics Council).

The Chairman informed Council members that no progress had been made regarding the future status and structure of the Council since the April meeting.

The point was raised that since Infectious Disease would be dealt with in terms of a conference rather than a report, that there may be scope for the Council to consider another topic during its current term of office. It was suggested that the Council should cover a topic, which would make a unique and significant contribution to bioethics debate in Ireland and Europe. It was agreed that the issue of new work topics for the Council would be revisited at its September meeting.

6. Action Points

It was agreed the following issues would be put on the agenda for September's meeting:

- The process of seeking external funding for Council projects
- Council budget

7. Date of next meeting

Thursday September 14th 2006 at 10:30am.
