

Irish Council for Bioethics
Comhairle Bitheitice na hÉireann

Minutes of Council Meeting
Thursday 3rd April 2008

- In the Chair:** Dr Dolores Dooley
- Present:** Dr Alan Donnelly; Professor Andrew Green; Professor Linda Hogan; Dr Richard Hull; Professor Cliona O'Farrelly; Dr Darina O'Flanagan; Professor Richard O'Kennedy; Dr Peter McKenna; Professor David Smith.
- Apologies for absence:** Professor John Vincent McLoughlin; Mr Stephen McMahon; Mr Asim Sheikh.
- Also present:** Dr Siobhán O'Sullivan; Dr Stephanie Dyke.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were adopted and signed.

2. Report from the Scientific Director

Dr O'Sullivan informed the Council that the Regenerative Medicine Institute (REMEDI) had invited Council members to judge the semi-finals and finals of their Wellcome-funded *Debating Science Issues* school debating competition for transition and 5th year students.

Dr O'Sullivan reported that a number of research ethics committees had expressed an interest in standardising the research ethics submission form for non-clinical research, and that the question of whether the Council would be willing to undertake the drafting and dissemination of a standardised form had been raised. While the members generally agreed such a project would be a valuable contribution to research ethics, it was decided that a single application form may not be appropriate for the diversity of non-clinical research carried out in third-level institutions and hospitals nationwide. The Council agreed that an ethical guidance handbook, providing easily accessible information on ethical requirements, e.g., compliance with the Data Protection Act, and which could include sample forms, would be more useful for the research community. The Council agreed, however, that unless additional funding could be sourced, this project could not be taken on immediately and would have to be considered for the work programme of the Council's next term of office.

Dr. O'Sullivan reported on the National Ethics Committees meeting which took place in Brdo, Slovenia, on 28-29 February 2008. The discussion at the meeting focused on animal cloning and food production, dual use of new technologies, responsible research in nanotechnology, the right to healthcare in a market oriented society and due care in terminal illness.

Dr O'Sullivan then took the opportunity to list the activities within which the Council is currently represented:

- Health Service Executive research ethics committee review group
- Department of Health and Children steering group on ethical issues in pandemic planning
- Exploration Station national advisory committee
- Beaumont Hospital working group on the ethics of live organ donation
- Dublin City of Science 2012 bid
- European Clinical Research Infrastructure Network
- Advisory Science Council

The Council remarked that this wide-ranging involvement reflects the prominent role ethics has come to play in relation to science policy and development in Ireland.

3. Biometrics

Dr. O'Sullivan reported that the biometrics consultation focus groups had been very successful and that the secretariat was currently awaiting the final report from Red C Research & Marketing Ltd. The preliminary programme for the biometrics policy conference, scheduled for November 2008, was circulated to members.

4. Stem cell research

The launch of the Opinion document on stem cell research, scheduled for 23 April 2008, will open with a welcome from the Chair and Professor Green, rapporteur on the stem cell research project, will present the key findings of the report. The secretariat will provide press packages and ensure media representatives are paired up with the appropriate interviewees on the day.

5. Any Other Business

Dr. O'Sullivan informed members that the Council had received a request from the Health Research Board and Department of Health and Children for comments on the draft report of the Expert Group on a National Cancer Biobank. Members who were interested in participating in this consultation were invited to contact the secretariat in view of arranging a meeting to discuss the Council's submission.

6. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 5th June 2008, at 10.30 am.