

Irish Council for Bioethics
Comhairle Bitheitice na hÉireann

Minutes of Council Meeting
Thursday 5th December 2007

- In the Chair:** Dr Dolores Dooley
- Present:** Dr Alan Donnelly; Professor John Vincent McLoughlin; Professor Andrew Green; Dr Richard Hull; Dr Peter McKenna; Professor Cliona O'Farrelly; Professor David Smith; Mr Stephen McMahon; Mr Asim Sheikh; Dr Darina O'Flanagan; Professor Richard O'Kennedy.
- Apologies for absence:** Professor Linda Hogan
- 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 members that, following the 2006 Ethical Dilemmas in a Pandemic policy conference, she had been asked to represent the ICB on the DOHC's flu pandemic expert group on ethics. Members were informed that the group's goal is to draw up an ethical framework, based on international best practice, under which decisions could be made in the event of a pandemic.

Dr O'Sullivan also informed members that, following the submission by the ICB on the Human Tissue Act she had a productive meeting with representatives from the DOHC in relation to the scope and content of the proposed legislation.

Members agreed that both these initiatives showed how the Council's work was having a positive impact on policy making.

Dr O'Sullivan reported that the recent bioethics radio series had received positive feedback and that the recordings had been well attended. She also informed members that RTÉ had given permission for the ICB to use the podcasts of the 6 shows for educational purposes. Members were informed that all podcast would be put on a single CD (for which a cover is currently being designed) and would be sent out in a pack including the information leaflets to 2nd level teachers, 3rd Level departments, policy makers, local libraries etc.

In relation to the proceedings document for the recent environmental ethics policy conference, Dr O'Sullivan reported that discussion transcripts and video footage of presentations had been received. Dr O'Sullivan informed members that podcasts of the presentations would be put on the bioethics website and that the proceedings document was currently being edited and would be published in the new year.

Dr O'Sullivan informed Council that Dr Alan Donnelly and Mr Asim Sheikh had volunteered to act as rapporteurs for the biometrics report. She reported that the stakeholder meetings for the project had already been held and that the minutes of those meetings would be forwarded to members prior to the next meeting. Dr O'Sullivan also reported that a market research company had been engaged to facilitate focus groups on the topic of biometrics in early 2008. It was agreed that focus groups would be an effective method of conducting the public consultation given the emerging and complex nature of biometrics. Dr O'Sullivan informed members that an information leaflet to help inform the focus group discussions was currently being prepared and would be circulated to the council prior to the commencement of the consultation process.

Dr O'Sullivan informed members that the Law Reform Commission (LRC) had agreed to put the topic of advance healthcare directives on their work programme for 2008, subject to government approval. The LRC expressed that they were looking forward to collaborating with the ICB.

Finally, Dr O'Sullivan informed members that the prints from Emma Turpin, the winning artist of the NCAD commission, were ready for distribution. All members agreed that Ms Turpin's print was a worthy winner and that the initiative should be repeated in the future. It was agreed that once the Council had relocated to more permanent office space, an event for the participating artists would be hosted.

3. Stem Cell Research Report

A draft of the report on stem cell research was presented to Council and its structure, conclusions, and underlying rationales, were discussed.

4. Any Other Business

Members were informed that the secondment process was ongoing and that incorporation should be completed early in the new year.

5. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 7th February 2008, at 10.30 am. Venue to be confirmed.