

Irish Council for Bioethics
Comhairle Bitheitice na hÉireann

Minutes of Council Meeting
Friday 8th March 2007

- In the Chair:** Mr Dermot Gleeson
- Present:** Dr Alan Donnelly; Professor Andrew Green; Dr Richard Hull; Mr Stephen McMahon; Dr Peter McKenna; Professor John Vincent McLoughlin; Professor Cliona O'Farrelly; Dr Darina O'Flanagan; Professor Richard O'Kennedy; Dr David Smith.
- Apologies for absence:** Dr Dolores Dooley; Professor Linda Hogan; 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 O'Sullivan informed members that the Council had participated in the Abbey Talks event accompanying the play *A Number* by Caryl Churchill. Dr O'Sullivan gave a pre-performance presentation on the ethics of cloning and participated in a post-theatre panel discussion along with Council members Professor O'Farrelly and Mr Sheikh.

Dr O'Sullivan reported on the progress of the Council's national playwriting competition, which received a total of 121 submissions. She informed members that submissions had been received from professional and amateur writers, from which the steering committee had short-listed 10 applicants and requested that they submit ten pages of dialogue by the 23rd March for their consideration.

To follow-up on the Council's 2006 policy conference, Dr O'Sullivan proposed that the Council commission a market research company to carry out a survey of Irish public opinion on the ethical issues associated with the control of an avian flu pandemic. The Council approved the proposal as a valuable initiative, and it was agreed the results of this research should be published along with the proceedings of the Council's conference collated by the secretariat.

Dr O'Sullivan reported that preparations for the RTÉ radio series and environmental ethics conference scheduled for October were underway, and that she was currently holding discussions with the National College of Art and Design with a view to commissioning a student for the production of a print on the theme of bioethics.

3. Advance Directives Report

Mr Ivory reported on the wide interest generated by the launch of the Council's report on advance healthcare directives. He informed members that 500 copies of the report had been distributed since the launch, and that the report had received 2,500 hits on the Council's website.

Professor Smith and Dr McKenna, who acted as rapporteurs to the Council for the advance directives opinion document, reported on the Council's newly adopted working procedure. Both spoke favorably of the rapporteur system, which allows the Council to interact directly with stakeholders, and it was agreed that this was more efficient than the Council's previous *modus operandi*, that of co-opting working groups of experts, and that the Council would continue to work in this way.

4. Stem Cell Research

Dr O'Sullivan announced that the public consultation on stem cell research, a questionnaire accompanied by an information leaflet, had been launched on the 5th of March. The consultation was advertised in the daily national papers and widely publicised via the secretariat's media initiatives.

The Council commented on the importance of consultation processes, and the valuable information that had been gathered from the series of stakeholder meetings held in the last quarter of 2006. The Council agreed that as a public consultation rather than an opinion poll, the purpose of this consultation is to ensure that all of the issues/concerns expressed by members of the public are addressed in the final report.

5. Any Other Business

Dr O'Sullivan reported on the incorporation of the Council, which is currently being arranged and will hopefully be finalised within six weeks.

On the occasion of Mr. Gleeson stepping down from the Chair, the Council members expressed their gratitude for his excellent chairing and direction, and wished him well with future endeavours.

6. Date of next meeting

Thursday 10th May, time and venue to be confirmed.