

**Irish Council for Bioethics**  
*Comhairle Bitheitice na hÉireann*

**Minutes of Council Meeting**  
**Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2006**

**In the Chair:** Mr Dermot Gleeson

**Present:** Mr Conor Brady; Dr Alan Donnelly; Dr Dolores Dooley; Professor Andrew Green; Dr. Peter McKenna; Mr Stephen McMahon; Professor Cliona O'Farrelly; Dr Darina O'Flanagan; Professor Richard O'Kennedy; Mr Asim Sheikh; Dr David Smith.

**Apologies for absence:** Professor John Vincent McLoughlin; Dr Richard Hull; Dr Linda Hogan.

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

**1. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting on 15th December 2005 were adopted and signed.

**2. Correspondence**

The Chairman acknowledged the kind letter from Dr. John O' Brien, Chief Executive of the Food Safety Authority congratulating the Council on the publication of the opinion document on genetically modified crops and food. The Chairman informed the members that the Irish Council for Bioethics (ICB) had accepted an invitation from the Medical Council's ethics committee to meet with a view to discussing the publication *Human Biological Material: Recommendations for Collection, Use and Storage in Research 2005*.

**3. Report from the Scientific Director**

The Scientific Director presented the Council with an overview of the ICB's 2006 public outreach and education programme. For its 3<sup>rd</sup> annual lecture, the Council plans to address the bioethical issues associated with a potential bird flu pandemic

The Council is also organising a radio series in collaboration with RTE as part of its public outreach programme. The show will address eight bioethical topics of interest to the general public (stem cell research, genetic testing, DNA databases, etc...), and the programme will be taken to audiences around the country. This project will hopefully

engage members of the general public and provide them with the opportunity to discuss key bioethical issues that affect their lives.

The Council will be extending the bioethics education project by organising the screening of popular films containing strong bioethical content (e.g., Gattacca, Minority Report, The Island...) in collaboration with the Irish Film Institute (IFI). The films will be screened around the country for audiences of secondary school students, and will be preceded by an interactive panel discussion and supported by printed material addressing the ethical issues that arise from the plot.

Finally, the Scientific Director reported on the efforts which are being made to modernise the Council's website and informed the Council that its members extranet would soon be accessible.

#### **4. Council work programme**

The Chairman presented the results of the Council vote on the potential bioethical topics that could be adopted for the Council's working programme. Four topics clearly emerged from the members' preferences: Bioethics Education, Advance Directives, Stem Cell Research and Organ Donation. It was agreed that the Council should aim to examine three areas of bioethical concern during its three-year term of office, with the goal of producing a Council report annually.

It was unanimously decided that Bioethics Education would be an ongoing objective and carried out in parallel to the examination and discussion of three other bioethical topics, to be the subject of Council reports. Several members wished to change their initially stated preferences, mainly with a view to placing more weight on the Control of Infectious Diseases. This proposal was backed given the concerns over bird flu, however, it was decided that the subject area must be scoped more precisely in order for the Council to assess whether or not it was capable of addressing the issue. Council members were invited to submit precise ethical questions they feel the Council's work on this topic should address in order to establish the scope of such a piece. The secretariat in turn will draft a scoping paper to be discussed by the Council at its next meeting.

Advance directives and Stem Cell Research were widely considered to be areas in which the ICB could make valuable contributions. The topics Organ Donation and Biometrics, both of which received a certain degree of interest, would be considered if need be.

#### **5. Working practices**

In light of experience gathered from the previous Council's work, it was decided that several of the Council's working practices should be amended. The members agreed to evaluate a new working method over the next six months: the Council's work would be carried out exclusively at its plenary sessions and specific rapporteurs would be designated for individual projects to act as intermediaries between the Council and the Secretariat. Members were invited to contact the scientific director in order to volunteer and/or nominate themselves or others to act as rapporteurs for the reports on Advance Directives and Stem Cell Research.

**6. Date of next meeting**

Thursday April 6<sup>th</sup> 2006 at 10:30am.

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