

Irish Council for Bioethics
Comhairle Bitheitice na hÉireann

Minutes for Council Meeting
Thursday 24th October 2005

In the Chair: Mr. Dermot Gleeson

Present: Mr. M. Dempsey; Dr P. Flanagan; Prof. P. Hannon; Prof. C. Kelleher; Dr. P. McKenna; Ms. M. Mulvihill; Prof. A. Scott.

Apologies for absence: Prof. P. Whittaker; Prof. P. Cunningham Dr. D. Dooley; Prof. M. Lawlor; Prof. T. McGleenan; Dr. N. O'Brien; Prof. F. O'Gara; Prof. R. O'Regan; Mr. A. Sheikh; Prof. S. Strain.

Also present: Dr. S. O'Sullivan; Dr. S. Dyke; Mr. P. Ivory.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 1st September 2005 were adopted and signed.

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

3. Report from the scientific director

Dr. O'Sullivan reported on the bioethics teaching project with transition year students, which has been piloted in a Co. Dublin school (Portmarnock Community School) with Mr. P. Ivory. The program was well received by teachers and students and has allowed the pilot exercises to be evaluated in their capacity to engage students and stimulate reflection. The experience gained and feedback that has been gathered from students will be used to refine the teaching material with a view to developing a bioethics teaching package to be distributed nation-wide.

Dr. O'Sullivan then commented on the findings of the Public Attitudes Towards Bioethics survey carried out by TNS MRBI and commissioned by the Council. It was accepted that the results were interesting as a piece of market research and may be valuable to the work of the future Council. It was also suggested that the results of the survey might provide good material for a radio, TV or news piece aimed at generating an interest in bioethics in as wide an audience as possible. Local radio and news were considered to be valuable resources to achieve this goal.

Dr. O'Sullivan informed the group that the secretariat was compiling a report that would provide a summary of the Council's activities since its installment and be submitted to the Department of Enterprise, Trade, and Employment. This report will be forwarded to

the Council members and made available to the public on the Irish Council for Bioethics website.

The Chairman informed the members that deliberations concerning the future “home” of the Council were ongoing between the Council, the RIA, and the Department of Enterprise, Trade, and Employment.

Dr. O’Sullivan re-extended an invitation to the half-day symposium on 3rd November 2005 on the establishment of a forensic DNA database in Ireland. Ms. De Grae has arranged media coverage for this event. It was suggested that the subject matter may be worthy of a short position paper from the future Council.

The Chair informed the members that he had received an invitation to a meeting with the Medical Council from their legal advisor.

4. Opinion Document on GM Crops/Foods

The members complemented the GMO working group on producing a balanced, detailed document that would be of interest to a large number of people. Council members were satisfied with the content and form of the report on GM crops and foods and submitted their minor typographical and editorial comments to the secretariat for inclusion in the final draft. Dr. O’Sullivan relayed the views of absentees Mr. A. Sheikh and Dr. D. Dooley, which were in agreement with those of the members present. It was decided that the Council should launch the opinion piece in November.

5. Opinion Document on Research Ethics Committees

Several members felt that the opinion document on research ethics committees had not sufficiently matured and warranted further work prior to publication. It was agreed that this task would be passed on to the incoming Council with a strong recommendation from the current Council for a central clearing house for ethical applications in multi-centre studies be established. A note to this effect would be drafted by the Council secretariat, ratified by Prof. C. Kelleher and Prof. A. Scott, and presented to the future Council at their inaugural meeting.

6. Any other business

There was no other business.

7. Goodbye

The Chair noted that this was the last meeting of the present Council and thanked the members for their dedicated time and efforts. Council members expressed their thanks to Mr. Dermot Gleeson for the excellent job he had done in chairing in Council.
