



Media Release

Operational Procedures for Research Ethics Committees: Guidance 2004

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For Immediate Release

The Irish Council for Bioethics has produced a document entitled *Operational Procedures for Research Ethics Committees: Guidance 2004* and was launched by Mr Ivor Callely, Minister of State for Health and Children on Tuesday 14th September 2004.

The Council is hopeful that the guidance contained in this document will facilitate Research Ethics Committees (RECs) in conducting independent, comprehensive ethical review of research proposals, which will serve researchers and the public alike.

The guidelines recommend that one-third of RECs should be made up of lay members i.e. members who are independent from the institution/organisation under whose authority the REC is established and who are not involved in scientific, clinical practice or legal work. Thus RECs can facilitate a truly lay perspective.

In the last number of years the expansion of scientific knowledge has resulted in the development of new treatments and technologies e.g. genomics. Research Ethics Committees are tasked with ensuring that the scope and nature of such advances occur in a safe and ethical manner. Until now, Ireland lacked comprehensive guidance with respect to the ethical review of research involving human participants.

The Irish Council for Bioethics established a working group to examine this area and following a comprehensive evaluation of international best practice and a wide ranging discussion by the Council, has produced this document.

Professor Cecily Kelleher, chairperson of the working group said 'I think it is of the utmost importance that we have a set of national best practice guidelines in relation to the operation of research ethics committees. The existing framework has served Ireland well but at this time of change and innovation we need the highest quality standards of research.'

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