



MEDIA RELEASE

Safeguarding the rights of blood and tissues donors in research

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The Irish Council for Bioethics has established a working group to consider the use of human biological material, such as blood and tissue material, in medical research.

The Council will produce ethical recommendations for scientific researchers and is now seeking the views of the public to inform the recommendations. Advertisements will appear in the Irish Times, Irish Independent and the Irish Examiner on Friday 25 July 2003.

This is a timely development as it is important to balance the need for blood and tissue samples required for vital research into serious diseases such as cancer with the ethical and legal issues involved and the wishes and concerns of the individual. .

Professor Mark Lawler chairman of the working group said 'We need to ensure that there is public confidence in the ethics and integrity of the research process'. Dr Siobhán O Sullivan, Scientific Director of the Irish Council for Bioethics hopes that the eventual recommendations can provide an appropriate balance between encouraging research which benefits society as a whole and safeguarding the rights of individuals who donate their blood or tissue.

End



Submissions on the question of biological material for research

Some of the questions to be tackled will include:

Is it appropriate to use stored biological materials in ways that originally were not contemplated either by the people from whom the material came from or by those who collected the material ?

Should the person from whom the biological material is removed have any legal or commercial claim to the material once it has been donated?

What are the appropriate safeguards for people who are unable to give consent because they are too young or too ill ?

What should be done with material already collected for which consent was not sought or is not valid?

How can we ensure that information about research participants remains confidential?

Should criteria for patentability apply to biological material, just as they are applied to all other inventions?

How should biological material being sent to a third party/abroad be regulated?

Under what circumstances should we allow the establishment of biobanks?

Written submissions should be sent to the Irish Council for Bioethics before Friday 12 September. Submissions may also be made via www.bioethics.ie You are not required to limit your comments to the above topics. All submissions received will be carefully reviewed and considered by the Council and will be treated in a confidential manner. Submissions will inform the recommendations of the biological material working group.

The Irish Council for Bioethics is an independent body, which was established in 2002 to identify and interpret the ethical questions raised by research in science and medicine in order to respond to, and anticipate questions of substantive concern.