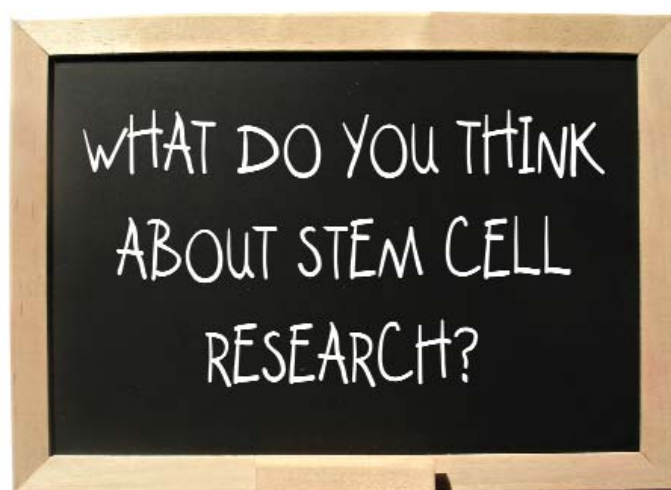


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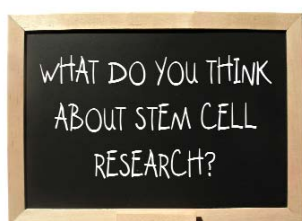
March 2007



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Public to have their say on stem cell research



Two new Sciencewise dialogue initiatives are under way to find out public attitudes towards the fast moving and challenging science of stem cell research.

The first – announced by the new Science Minister, Malcolm Wicks at the beginning of March – will be carried out under the auspices of the Research Councils UK and will aim to gain an insight into public expectations, aspirations and concerns about the research and its uses.

The £300,000 Sciencewise-funded project is being led by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the Medical Research Council (MRC). It will also have input from a number of key stakeholders including the National Stem Cell Network and the UK Stem Cell Communications Coalition.

The initial phase to scope out the project is expected to take place in June and a contract for delivering the dialogue activities will then be put out to competitive tender. A contractor is expected to be in place by late summer and the project will last up to 12 months.

The second project – on hybrid/chimera stem cell research - is being led by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA). Scientists in the UK are taking a leading role in embryonic stem cell research, using either donated embryos or embryos created through cloning, and some researchers now want to derive stem cells from cloned human-animal hybrid embryos to overcome the shortage of human eggs available for research.

The HFEA, which is responsible for licensing and regulating this type of research activity, wants to explore the social and ethical issues involved through a constructive and properly informed dialogue between the public, scientists and policy makers.

A specialist dialogue contractor, Opinion Leader Research (OLR) has been appointed to deliver the project, which begins in April and will last for four months. It will run alongside the HFEA's written and online consultation, which was announced last December, and its outcomes will assist the Authority in its decision-making processes.

Gaining an insight into public expectations, aspirations and concerns about the research and its uses.

For more information please contact:

Maggie Leggett at the BBSRC
E-mail: maggie.leggett@bbsrc.ac.uk

Charles Lister at the HFEA,
E-mail: charles.lister@hfea.gov.uk

Drugsfutures project launched



“It is important to look into the future; we need to know what your views and priorities are before decisions are made”.

On January 31st, Professor Sir Gabriel Horn FRS launched the drugsfutures project with these words and so began a programme of activities designed to explore hopes and concerns around future drug use and drug culture.

The opening event, attended by public participants, scientific experts and representatives from the various Government departments responsible for UK drug policy, marked the start of a series of discussions across the UK. Through February and March, workshops were held in Birmingham, Liverpool, Exeter, Belfast, Glasgow and Merthyr Tydfil. In each location, outreach events designed to engage target audiences (including drug users, carers,

older adults and young people), preceded day-long workshops involving a broad cross-section of the public.

An Academy of Medical Sciences working group, chaired by Sir Gabriel, will receive a report on the findings from the events and the accompanying on-line consultation, before making their recommendations to Government on future policy and research needs in relation to brain science, addiction and drugs. Working group members have joined additional ‘experts’ (including scientists, police, drug workers and service users) at the various events to listen and engage in a two-way discussion.

The previous Chief Scientific Advisor, Sir David King supported the project, being run on behalf of the Academy by a consortium led by the Office for

Public Management (OPM), commenting “if brain science research is to flourish we must maintain a dialogue with the public to inform policy that ensures scientists are responsive to the type of drug use our society finds acceptable”.

“It is important to look into the future; we need to know what your views and priorities are before decisions are made”.

Professor Sir Gabriel Horn FRS

To join the debate visit:
www.drugsfutures.org.uk



New guide available

“Using clear language, simple instructions, illustrative case studies and a glossary, this guide is a valuable tool for anyone involved in running or commissioning public engagement in central government and beyond”.

To download your free copy visit www.involve.org.uk/evaluation

Questions or comments?

please contact Karin Gavelin
at: karin@involve.org.uk or
telephone: 020 7632 0123

Making a Difference: A guide to evaluating public participation in central government

Involve, in collaboration with Shared Practice and the Department for Constitutional Affairs have produced a Guide to Evaluating Public Engagement that has now been published as a **webguide and pdf document**.

Public engagement is becoming a central plank of public policy-making. Activities range from large-scale consultations that involve tens of thousands of people, to social and market research, on-line discussion forums and small, deliberative citizens' juries.

As government increases the scope and size of its public engagement activities, it is becoming increasingly important to assess the effectiveness of the different engagement methods, increase accountability and learn from past experiences. This is where evaluation comes in. Evaluation helps public engagement organisers set and measure attainable objectives, assess impact, and identify lessons for future practice.

Projects in the spotlight...

Riskybusiness



Leaders in innovation in science education, the Centre for Science Education, has teamed up with the country's foremost theatre of debate experts, Y Touring Theatre Company, to deliver a brand new approach to young people's participation in science and citizenship.

It's a bitterly cold March day and six classes of year 11 girls are clamouring in the large Victorian corridor outside the lower school hall. Inside four actors warm up and get into character. Two laptops sit on the table, one to relay backdrop images onto a large screen directly behind the circular portable stage and one programmed to receive the votes from the 'Who Wants To Be A Millionaire' style voting pads. This is the middle of a four week run of fifty performances, a sell out for Risky Business.

The characters are a climate change scientist, his boss and his two children. The play begins with images of the last tree being cut down on Easter

Island and questions how humans could have managed their resources so badly. From then it touches on a myriad of risks from gambling to knife crime.

A key theme is when scientists find out things that are scary to the public. The task then is to decide what should be done with this information.

After the play the students use their keypads to answer questions about where they think responsibility lies for looking after the environment, whether they themselves would change their habits to be more environmentally responsible and many more. They then take part in the most important activity - a discussion which

can last up to one and a half hours. The actors in character are able to respond to direct questions from the students with a plethora of technical facts, arguments and dilemmas for discussion.

“Young people voicing their thoughts and opinions on climate change to politicians”.

For more information

please contact
Peter Finegold at:

enquiries@isinglassconsultancy.co.uk

Expert Resource Centre

Building on work done in a Scoping Study in June 2006, the Sciencewise Strategy Group and Panel members will come together on 29th March to put forward ideas for the Expert Resource Centre announced by the Chancellor in December 2006.

An appetite for dialogue

Around Government there has been a vast increase in the effective channelling of opinions, ideas and concerns from the public to ministers. At an event, hosted by the National Consumer Council, Gordon Brown, Patricia Hewitt and Caroline Flint were discussing health issues with participants. Ideas flowed freely, with the use of a facilitator to help discussion along. However, the question on a number of participants lips was:

“how will we know if they have listened?”

Impact

This is a crucial question and one the ERC must try hard to address. Kathy Sykes, the Sciencewise Chair, is extremely interested in building a body of evidence to show how effective Public Dialogue impacts the real world, reduces problematic decisions on science and technology issues and gives ministers the confidence to

invest in science research when there is clear public support. We need to be able to answer the question:

“how has the quality of policy changed since we started Public Dialogue and what difference does that make?”

Learning and guidance

Other work for the ERC may well involve giving one to one targeted advice to policy makers attempting dialogue for the first time. The ERC will collect learning from all national level public dialogue processes on science and technology issues to refine guidance and offer up to date advice on whether and when to use the many innovative forms of dialogue (voting handsets, mobile phones, e-participation etc) about to be unleashed on what appears to be a public ready and waiting to interact with them.

Linking in

Working with other departments

and initiatives such as Engage, the Cabinet Office’s Better Consultation group and the Department of Constitutional Affairs will be crucial to the success of the ERC. It is also hoped that it will be sufficiently funded to take an active part in learning lessons from colleagues at the EU level.

Case Studies

Sciencewise is currently working with others across government to create a template for case studies that can be widely accessed and is useful to all policy makers on science and technology issues. Their needs will inform the creation of a searchable database which will store data to help policy makers understand how others have worked.

If you would like to give your input to this template please contact Alison Crowther at: alison.crowther@aeat.co.uk

What's coming up?

Sciencehorizons

Sciencehorizons will be holding a number of events in the coming months:

sciencehorizons : Discussing the future

Wednesday, 4 April 2007

Time: 7pm

Venue: Sheffield Cafe Scientifique, Sheffield

sciencehorizons at York Cafe Scientifique

Monday, 16 April 2007

Time: 7.30pm

Venue: The Kings Manor Refectory

People and Planet 2025

Wednesday, 18 April 2007

Time: 19.00-20.30

Venue: Dana Centre, London

Knutsford SciBAR, 'The way science is going'

Tuesday, 24 April 2007

Time: 18.30 for 19.30 - 21.00

Venue: The Angel Hotel, King St. Knutsford

sciencehorizons: new technologies, the future and society

Wednesday, 9 May 2007

Time: 14.00-16.00

Venue: Natural History Museum, London

sciencehorizons: new technologies, the future and society

Saturday, 19 May 2007

Time: 14.30-16.30

Venue: Natural History Museum, London

Knutsford SciBAR, 'The way science is going'

Date: Tuesday, 22 May 2007

Time: 18.30 for 19.30 - 21.00

Venue: The Angel Hotel, King St. Knutsford

Work and Play 2025

Thursday, 24 May 2007

Time: 19.00-20.30

Venue: Dana Centre, London

sciencehorizons: new technologies, the future and society

Wednesday, 13 June 2007

Time: 12.00 - 14.00

Venue: Natural History Museum, London

Knutsford SciBAR, 'The way science is going'

Tuesday, 19 June 2007

Time: 18.30 for 19.30 - 21.00

Venue: The Angel Hotel, King St. Knutsford

Mind and Body 2025

Thursday, 28 June 2007

Time: 19.00-20.30

Venue: Dana Centre, London

In April and May a deliberative panel, made up of members of the public and local scientists, will run in Bristol to look at the issues raised by sciencehorizons in greater depth.

In June the project will invite policymakers to a seminar to discuss the results and how they can help inform policy.

The results of all of these discussions will be presented at the BA Festival of Science in York in September 2007.

For more information about these events please visit:

www.sciencehorizons.org.uk/calendar.asp



Both the Nanotechnology Engagement Group (NEG) and Nanodialogues will be launching their final reports in June 2007.

For more information please contact:

Jack Stilgoe (Nanodialogues) at: jack@demos.co.uk

or Karin Gavelin (NEG) at: karin@involve.org.uk

AWARD NOMINATION

Trustguide have received a top three nomination for the **UN Public Service Award 2007**, from the Ideal Government Site run by William Heath of Kablenet, based on the important subject matter and the quality of their research methodology.

Want to find out more? please visit: www.idealgovernment.com

Working in partnership with:

*together***we**can

For more
information visit:
www.sciencewise.org.uk

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0870 190 6324

or email:
sciencewise@aeat.co.uk