



Ethics of stem cell research brings Chinese and European scientists together



Conference participants

Over the three days, participants heard talks from among many others Professor Lu Guangxiu (Institute of Reproduction and Stem Cell Engineering, Central South University, Changsha), Dr Stephen Minger (Stem Cell Biology Laboratory, King's College London), Professor Hans-Georg Koch (Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Criminal Law), Professor Sheng Huizhen, and Professor Moustapha Kassem (Medical Biotechnology Centre, University of Southern Denmark).

Through paper presentations and discussions, participants explored how consensus on ethical principles for stem cell research might be achieved, how effective systems of science governance can be put in place, how conflicts of interests between researchers, clinicians and their institutions could be managed as well as how desperate patients could best be safeguarded.

'We look forward to the future of biomedical technology. People live on the same earth and share in all biomedical outcomes. We need more mutual understanding and respect to seek Great Harmony and to reserve our differences on minor points for the progress of all human beings,' said conference host and BIONET partner Professor Lu Guangxiu.

The conference report is available for download from the BIONET website: www.bionet-china.org

Around 100 Chinese and European stem cell scientists, reproductive medicine practitioners, ethicists, social scientists and legal experts met for a conference on the ethical governance of stem cell research from 1-3 April 2008 in Changsha, the capital of the People's Republic of China's Hunan Province. The three-day conference marked the halfway point for BIONET and rounded up BIONET's work in the reproductive and regenerative medicine fields. The event was opened by Vice Governor of Hunan Province Guo Kailang, Science & Innovation Counsellor David Concar from the British Embassy, Yu Xiucheng from the Ministry of Public Health and Vice President of Central South University Li Guiyuan.



Dr. Stephen Minger addressing the opening ceremony

Reporting bioethics



As a satellite activity to the BIONET conference, the Science and Development Network (SciDev.Net) organised a one-day capacity building workshop at the Institute of Science and Technology Journalism and Communication, Hunan University in Changsha. The workshop received funding and support from Bertelsmann Stiftung and the China Science Reporting Network. A total of 53 science and health journalists attended. BIONET partners Ole Doering, Qiu Renzong, Cong Yali, Zhai Xiaomei, Herbert Gottweis, Christoph Rehmann-Sutter and Lu Guangxiu all made presentations. The workshop covered some common ethical issues in biomedical researches, China's regulatory system in biomedical ethics as well as practical guides and analysis in reporting ethics-related researches and practice.

BIONET junior researchers network

The second round of BIONET student exchanges are currently taking place. Anika Mitzkat of the University of Witten-Herdecke in Germany spent three months in Changsha from March to May 2008 carrying out qualitative social research at the CITIC-Xianya Hospital of Reproduction and Genetics, Changsha. Her project concerns patients' views on embryo donation to stem cell research in the IVF process. She also gave a presentation of her preliminary ideas and findings at the Changsha conference. Chen Haidan of Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, China is spending one month in the United Kingdom and Austria (May-June 2008) as she works

on her PhD project entitled 'Regenerating China: Stem Cell Politics in Transition'. In the United Kingdom she will be attending the kick-off meeting at York University of the 'Regenerative medicine in Europe: emerging needs and challenges in a global context' project and in Austria she will visit BIONET partners at the University of Austria. Finally, Sui Suli of the University of Amsterdam who is currently doing research on genetic counselling in China, will in September 2008 carry out comparative research in the United Kingdom on a project entitled 'The Practice of Genetic Counselling in the UK – comparing governance and practice of genetic counselling in China and the UK'.

BIONET workshop on clinical trials in Xi'an

The next BIONET event will be a workshop on the topic of the ethical governance of clinical trials research which will be held in Xi'an from 9-12 September 2008. The workshop which is being organised and hosted by BIONET partner Professor Zhai Xiaomei of the Peking Union Medical College and Professor Qiu Renzong of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences will address some of the numerous challenges facing European and Chinese researchers who enter into research collaborations in the field of clinical trials research. These challenges included informed consent processes and the dangers of therapeutic misconception, conflicts of interest, benefit sharing as well as use of placebo arms. Around 50 experts from China and Europe will attend the workshop.

Interim report from BIONET Expert Group

The Chinese and European Expert Group on ethical governance of life science and biomedical research has released its interim report after having reached the halfway mark of BIONET. Over the last year and a half, the group has met seven times in conjunction with BIONET events in Beijing, Shanghai and Changsha. The Expert Group, chaired by Christoph Rehmann-Sutter and co-chaired by Qiu Renzong, is working towards a set of 'recommendations for best practice in

the Ethical Governance of Europe-China Research Collaborations in the Life Sciences and Biomedicine'. The recommendations will be aimed at funders of research, policy makers, regulators, scientists, clinicians involved in research, research institutions (public and private), scientific journal editors, the general public and the media, both in Europe and in China. They will address questions of ethical governance in the: approval of research collaboration projects; sourcing of biological samples; recruitment of human subjects; conduct of research; dissemination of research results; and sharing of benefits of the research.

BIONET Roadmap

Workshop 3 (September 2008) is on the topic of 'Clinical Research and Clinical Research Organisations in EU-China research – ethics and governance issues' while the 4th and final workshop will be on "Biobanking and Genomic Research" and will be organised by Yang Huanming of the Beijing Genomics Institute.

