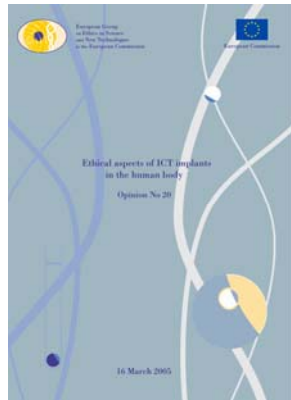


# The European Group on Ethics in Science & New Technologies

Julian Kinderlerer



N° 20

Adopted on 16/03/2005

Original in English

ETHICAL ASPECTS OF ICT IMPLANTS IN THE HUMAN BODY

Opinion on the ethical aspects of  
nanomedicine

- Opinion N° 21 -

- Personal view, not representing the EGE, but here as a member of that body.

# Mandate

In November 1991, the European Commission decided to incorporate ethics into the decision-making process for Community research and technological development policies by setting up the Group of Advisers on the Ethical Implications of Biotechnology (GAEIB).

# Mandate

The Commission decided on 16 December 1997 to replace the GAEIB by the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE) extending the Group's mandate to cover all areas of the application of science and technology.

# Mandate

The Commission hereby decides to renew the mandate of the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE) for a four-year period.

# Mandate

The task of the EGE shall be to advise the Commission on ethical questions relating to sciences and new technologies, either at the request of the Commission or on its own initiative. The Parliament and the Council may draw the Commission's attention to questions which they consider to be of major ethical importance. The Commission shall, when seeking the opinion of the EGE, set a time limit within which an opinion shall be given.

# Mandate

- Article 4.2. The EGE work programme shall be agreed by the President of the Commission (including ethical reviews suggested by the EGE under their right of self initiative — see Article 2).

# Recent Opinions

- 15 14/11/2000 - Ethical aspects of human stem cell research and use
- 16 07/05/2002 - Ethical aspects of patenting inventions involving human stem cells
- 17 04/02/2003 - Ethical aspects of clinical research in developing countries
- 18 28/07/2003 - Ethical aspects of genetic testing in the workplace
- 19 16/03/2004 - Ethical aspects of umbilical cord blood banking
- 20 16/03/2005 - Ethical aspects of ICT Implants in the Human Body
- 21 17/01/2007 - Ethical aspects of nanomedicine



# Current Work

- Human Embryonic Stem Cells research in Framework Programme 7
- Cloning of Animals for Food Use
- Modern Intensive Agriculture and Sustainability

# Recent Opinions

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- 21 17/01/2007 - Ethical aspects of nanomedicine

# Opinion 17

- the European Commission proposed in August 2002 to initiate a long-term partnership between Europe and developing countries to join efforts to combat poverty-linked diseases such as AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

# Opinion 17

- Developing countries differ from industrialised countries regarding economic and social contexts.
- In developing countries, little or no infrastructure is available for the population at large, particularly concerning healthcare services.
- In addition, cultural differences may also exist regarding traditions, family or community structures and moral values.

# Opinion 17

- In industrialised countries, there is a rather homogeneous conception of what is good scientific method based on a logical and rational approach, while in other cultures, other medical traditions may exist, and our approach concerning scientific research may have no equivalent.

# Opinion 17

- Different cultures may have different values. In a paternalistic or imperialistic approach, the sponsor of the research tends to impose his own values on the host country. In contrast, when the respect for local tradition leads to relativism and non-respect of values considered as fundamental in Europe, this implies a risk of double standards.

# Opinion 17

- The way information is given to patients and the procedure of obtaining consent may vary according to the specific situation of the country where a clinical trial takes place, namely regarding the level of literacy, the level of scientific understanding, the organisation of the community, etc. That may influence the consent procedures regarding the involvement of persons, in particular women, in a clinical trial.

# Opinion 17

- Different cultures may have different views regarding privacy and personal data. This may have consequences for the acceptability of certain aspects of research protocols, namely regarding data collection, and the data subject's right of access and right to object.



# Opinion 17

- The organisation of society may also differ between different parts of the world. While European society is characterised by the increasing value of individualism in the search of happiness, but at the same time has a collective strong solidarity at national level for guaranteeing access to healthcare for all, other societies give more importance to the local community or to the family (in a context of weak national solidarity in relation to access to healthcare).

# Opinion 17

- In principle, the involvement in a clinical trial is a benevolent act and should not be induced by financial or other recompense, mainly to avoid exploitation. The protection of participants in clinical trials in industrialised countries has been built up over decades, according to a given socioeconomic background. The strict transposition of such a system of protection to developing countries, without considering their socioeconomic specificities, will not ensure the same level of protection of the participants. The protocol cannot ignore the context where the clinical trial will take place and in a context of poverty and absence of healthcare, the fact of participating in a clinical trial may constitute for the patient the only opportunity to have access to healthcare.

# Opinion 17

- The huge gap between industrialised countries and developing countries regarding standards of living and especially access to healthcare is an example of the inequalities in our world. Even if the objectives and goals of scientific research cannot alone solve this unfair situation, research carried out in developing countries should avoid widening this gap even more; on the contrary, it should contribute to reducing it. The private or public investigators who do their research in developing countries have a moral duty to make a concrete contribution to overcome inequalities.