

Authority Paper

Committee:	Authority Meeting
Meeting Date:	9 May 2007
Agenda Item:	10
Paper Number:	HFEA (09/05/07) 374
Paper Title:	Interim update on Hybrid Consultation
Author:	Helen Coath, Policy Manager
For Information or Decision?	For information
Resource Implications:	The Hybrids Review has significant resource (financial and staff) implications and is an addition to the Business Plan.
Communication:	A communications strategy has been devised to manage the communication around the consultation.
Organisational Risk:	High – The consultation process is likely to be scrutinised by many stakeholders,
Recommendation to the Committee:	Members are asked to note the approach outlined.
Evaluation:	The consultation will be evaluated independently by Diane Warburton from Shared Practice.

Introduction

1. At its meeting on 28 March the Authority approved the content of the hybrids and chimeras consultation document. The consultation launches on 26 April and runs for three months, closing on 20 July 2007. An online questionnaire has been developed for respondents to register their views and copies of the document can be obtained from the HFEA website. Hard copies of the consultation document have been sent to centres and relevant stakeholders, in addition to those who have registered their interest.
2. Opinion Leader (a research based consultancy) has been commissioned to undertake the public dialogue element of the consultation. This will consist of deliberative groups, a public meeting and an opinion poll.
3. The HFEA has been awarded a grant of £60,000 by Sciencewise to contribute to the funding of the deliberative work. Sciencewise is funded by the Office of Science and Innovation (OSI) at the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and helps policy makers in Government departments and agencies commission and use public dialogue to inform decision-making in emerging areas of science and technology.

Public Dialogue Work

4. There will be three distinct strands to the public dialogue element of the consultation, which will seek to gauge public opinion on hybrid and chimera research and explore why people feel the way they do.

5. A Stakeholder Advisory Group has been established to advise on the scoping and development of the public dialogue element of the consultation. The group will meet three times during the course of the project to comment on the plans for the deliberative groups, the public meeting and the evaluation. They will also be asked to comment on various materials.

Deliberative Groups

6. The aim of the deliberative groups is to explore and understand public perceptions, motivations and attitudes to hybrid and chimera research. Initially twelve deliberative groups will take place across the UK, during May. Participants will represent a range of ages, social economic backgrounds, religions and races. These groups will be used to introduce participants to the issues and gather initial reactions to the different types of research involving human/animal embryos.
7. Half of the participants will be invited to attend a day long workshop in the first week of June, where they will be exposed to further information. Expert speakers will be used to illustrate the difference issues/arguments surrounding the research. The aim of this second stage is to explore how the views and opinions of participants change when exposed to different information.

Public Meeting

8. A public meeting will be held in the last week of June, as a flagship event which is accessible to both interested stakeholders and the general public. The meeting will help to increase public awareness of the consultation and the issues involved.
9. The event will be chaired by Nick Ross and include a debate involving a panel of experts, to whom which questions will be posed by the audience.

Public Opinion Poll

10. The purpose of the public opinion poll is to gauge public opinion on a number of headline questions. Experience from the deliberative group work will be used to help formulate questions for the poll. The opinion poll will take place in June.
11. The poll will target 2,000 residents of Great Britain, along with 60 residents of Northern Ireland. Methods will be used to ensure that participants are selected at random.

Scientific consultation

12. In order to increase our understanding of the scientific issues in relation to the use of hybrid and chimera embryos in research, a small number of stakeholders (including the Medical Research Council, Royal Society and Human Genetics Alert) are being consulted on specific scientific issues. These include the issue of viability, the biological problems and benefits of such research and potential reasons for undertaking the research.

Information to be presented to the Authority

13. The findings from the public dialogue work will be presented to the Authority alongside the analysis of responses from the written consultation. A comprehensive picture of public and stakeholder opinion will be presented which will consist of:

- Stakeholder views, gathered through the written consultation exercise;
 - Public perception, gauged through the opinion poll and second deliberative group;
 - Scientific opinion on specific issues, including viability and the benefits of such research; and
 - An exploration of how public opinions are formed and how they change when exposed to different information, gained through the deliberative work.
14. The information gathered from the consultation will be presented to the Authority alongside on 5 September. Opinion Leader will also make a presentation on their findings at the meeting.

Evaluation

15. The public dialogue element of the consultation will be evaluated independently by Diane Warburton from Shared Practice. The evaluation will be focused on learning, with priority given to identifying and reticulating lessons for future practice. This will involve both public participants and stakeholders.

Conclusion

16. Members are asked to note the approach outlined.