

**Embargoed until 00.01am Saturday 27 March 2010**

**Academy commissions Ipsos MORI to explore public views on research using animals containing human material**

The Academy of Medical Sciences has awarded a contract of £100,000 to a consortium led by Ipsos MORI to gather public views on research using animals containing human material. The results will feed into an independent report being prepared for Government by an expert working group, ensuring its recommendations are informed by the views of both scientists and members of the public.

The programme will involve members of the public in a series of reconvened workshops and interviews throughout May and June 2010. The programme will provide opportunities for participants to discuss and explore their aspirations and concerns about current and future issues related to the use of animals containing human material. It will identify areas of consensus, disagreement and uncertainty to help inform the final recommendations made by the Academy for public policy and research needs.

The creation and use of animals incorporating human material has a long-standing and successful research history and has made significant contributions in basic and translational science. However, the increasing power and sophistication of methods for introducing human material into animals, including new stem cell technologies, is likely to present new opportunities and significant regulatory and ethical challenges in the future. Discussion of this rapidly advancing area of science is needed to ensure that research into our understanding of diseases and their treatment can take place in the UK within a robust ethical and regulatory framework that the public is comfortable with.

The programme of public dialogue is supported by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills' Sciencewise-ERC programme. The dialogue will be undertaken

by the Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute in partnership with Dialogue by Design and the British Science Association.

Chair of the Academy of Medical Sciences' working group on animals containing human material, Professor Martin Bobrow CBE FRS FMedSci said, *'The study is challenging us to think hard about the unique features which define us as human. We hope that the public's views will help shape our deliberations, and that this dialogue will reveal how different groups view the boundary between human and animal, and what informs their hopes and concerns around this research.'*

Science and Innovation Minister Lord Drayson said, *'These animals can play a key role in advancing new therapies for currently incurable diseases. But dialogue is vital for increasing our understanding of the public's hopes and concerns about new technologies.'*

*'I particularly welcome the consortium approach at the heart of this project. By bringing together world-renowned research expertise with experienced dialogue practitioners and science communication professionals, the public has a real opportunity to make their voices heard and help shape future policy.'*

A Department of Health Spokesperson said, *'It is essential that there is dialogue with the public on this important area of work. It can be an emotive area of research but one that holds the potential to bring huge advances for healthcare in the future.'*

*'We have a long term commitment to research and are confident that the Academy's report will benefit greatly from this.'*

Sarah Castell, Head of Qualitative Methods, Ipsos MORI said, *'I am delighted that the Academy has chosen us carry out public dialogue on this important area. Ipsos MORI, Dialogue by Design and the British Science Association believe that this is the right methodology to give the Academy a really thoughtful and rounded view of public attitudes to this complex topic. We're looking forward to working with the public, as they navigate through the scientific evidence, meet with scientists and other experts, and explore different perspectives.'*

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## **Notes for Editors**

### ***Academy of Medical Sciences***

The independent Academy of Medical Sciences promotes advances in medical science and campaigns to ensure these are translated into benefits for patients. The Academy's Fellows are the United Kingdom's leading medical scientists and scholars from hospitals, academia, industry and the public service.

Academy of Medical Sciences, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH.

[www.acmedsci.ac.uk](http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk)

Further information on the 'Animals containing human material' project can be found at <http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk/p118pressid60.html>

### ***Sciencewise-ERC***

The Sciencewise-ERC, funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), helps policy makers commission and use public dialogue to inform policy decisions in emerging areas of science and technology. It consists of a comprehensive online resource of information, advice and guidance together with a wide range of support services aimed at policy makers and all the different stakeholders involved in science and technology policy making, including the public. The Sciencewise-ERC also provides co-funding to Government departments and agencies to develop and commission public dialogue activities.

[www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk](http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk)

### ***Ipsos MORI***

Ipsos MORI is one of the UK's leading research agencies, working extensively across both the public and private sector with considerable experience of research in to science and ethics: the Social Research Institute at Ipsos MORI has 250 specialist researchers cover all areas of public policy.

[www.ipsos-mori.com](http://www.ipsos-mori.com)

### ***Dialogue By Design***

Dialogue by Design specialises in running public and stakeholder engagement processes using online, paper-based and face-to-face methods. Over the past 10 years they have run more than 100 consultations for organisations as diverse as Defra, BERR, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the Department of Health, the Environment Agency, the Metropolitan Police, the North West Regional Assembly, the Institution of Chemical Engineers and the German Parliament.

[www.dialoguebydesign.net](http://www.dialoguebydesign.net)

### ***British Science Association***

The British Science Association is the UK's nationwide, open membership organisation that exists to advance the public understanding, accessibility and accountability of the sciences and engineering. Established in 1831, the British Science Association organises major initiatives across the UK, including National Science and Engineering Week, the annual British Science Festival, programmes of regional and local events, and an extensive programme for young people in schools and colleges. The Association also organises specific

activities for the science communication community in the UK through its Science in Society programme.

[www.britishtscienceassociation.org](http://www.britishtscienceassociation.org).