

## Meeting Report – 4th GFBR

**29 - 30 October 2002**  
**BRASILIA, BRAZIL**

The aim of this fourth version of the Global Forum in Brasilia 2002 was to impulse moral debate around pressing and current issues in research bioethics and genomics.

The meeting was attended by 119 professionals, researchers, managers, and bioethicists from both the developed and the developing world (See table). During two days, 29th and 30th of October 2002, they exchanged views on issues related to genomics, ethics, and international guidelines for the conduct of research involving human subjects.

The meeting consisted of plenary lectures, followed by appointed discussions, panel discussions on selected topics, and presentations of relevant cases taken from biomedical research experiences in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) Region and other WHO Regions. Sessions were held in Spanish, Portuguese, or English with simultaneous translation.

The IV Global Forum on Bioethics, devoted this time to genomics research, was organized by the Regional Program on Bioethics PAHO/WHO, located in Santiago, Chile, and PAHO Representation in Brazil with the support and sponsorship of the Fogarty International Center of the National Institutes of Health (USA) and the Wellcome Trust, UK, and other academic institutions with a shared interest in this issue, like the Centers for Disease Control, USA. As a host institution, PAHO contributed substantially to the costs of the meeting, which was made part of the official celebration of its centennial anniversary. At the opening ceremony, Director George Alleyne was accompanied by representatives of the sponsoring institutions and by PAHO officials such as Dr Jacobo Finkelman, PAHO/WHO Representative in Brazil, Dr Fernando Lolas, Director of the Regional Program on Bioethics, and Dr Leocir Pessini, representing the International Association for Bioethics and the Brazilian Society of Bioethics.

One presentation dealt with Genomic Medicine: New Opportunities and Challenges for Health Care. The lecturer was Dr. Gerardo Jiménez - Sánchez (Director, Consortium Institute of Medicine of the Genome, Mexico) and the commentator was Dr. Victor B. Penchaszadeh (Albert Einstein College of Medicine)

The second presentation was devoted to International Guidelines: Genomics and Global Health. The lecturer was Dr. Abdala Daar (University of Toronto, Canada) and the discussant was Dr. Fernando Lolas (Director, Regional Program of Bioethics, PAHO)

The links between genomics research and Higher Education, Public Policies and Social Implications were dealt with in roundtable discussions.

Dr. Robert Levine (Yale University) presented in summary form the current status of the recently published 2002 revision of the CIOMS Guidelines published in 1993. Dr Daniel Brock presented the WHO document "Genomics and World Health" in a compact form

As fundamental part of this meeting, three working groups were established to debate case studies, round tables and main presentations. Conclusions were presented in plenary and widely discussed under the moderation of Dr. James Drane.

The closing session, chaired by Mr. Lorenzo Agar from the Regional Program on Bioethics, included the participation of Dr. Juan Antonio Casas, Director of the Division of Health and Human Development of PAHO and Dr. Fernando Lolas, Director of the Regional Program of Bioethics of PAHO. They considered a success that the original goals of the meeting had been reached and hoped that this series of meetings would continue. They also acknowledged the local organization and thanked all those participants who had joined in making this a worthwhile initiative.

During the Forum it became increasingly clear that there are seldom right and wrong answers, particularly in such a rapidly changing world. What was more important was to build partnerships where researchers could learn from each other and exchange their views on the infinite complexity of

ethics and its interpretation. The Forum was valuable in enabling participants to contribute to this exchange of views on equal terms. It also emphasized the need to achieve excellence in the analysis and interpretation of moral norms in a culturally fair context, for the purpose of ethical analysis is not only to protect subjects or increase scientific output but also to provide "ethical sustainability" to decisions and proposals aimed at the betterment of the scientific enterprise and its human relevance.

Dr. Fernando Lolas  
Director  
Regional Program on Bioethics  
PAHO/WHO