Press Release

Council of Europe Press Division
Ref: 470a07
Tel: +33 (0)3 88 41 25 60
Fax:+33 (0)3 88 41 39 11
pressunit@coe.int
internet: www.coe.int/press

COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

47 members

Albania
Andorra
Armenia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Belgium
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Croatia
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Georgia
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Italy
Latvia
Liechtenstein
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malta
Moldova
Monaco
Montenegro
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Russia
San Marino
Serbia
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"
Turkey
Ukraine
United Kingdom

IMPORTANT DATE for your diary
Freely available genetic tests[1] and pharmacogenetics: what are the individual and collective issues in Europe?

European seminar on 2 October 2007 held by the Council of Europe, the French Ministry of Health and France's Agency for Biomedicine
Ministère de la Santé – Salle Pierre Laroque – 14 avenue Duquesne - Paris

Will all of us soon be able to buy means of establishing personal predisposition to a range of illnesses? What are the individual, family and collective implications of having simplified, medically unsupervised access to that kind of genetic information? Will a genetic test one day be an indispensable requirement for all medical treatment?
Developments in genetics are under extensive discussion internationally and the Council of Europe is about to adopt a new international legal instrument on genetic tests. In that context the Council of Europe, the French Ministry of Health and France's Agency for Biomedicine are holding a professional seminar in Paris on 2 October 2007 to discuss with all players the ethical, legal and social issues raised by pharmacogenetics and the development of freely available genetic tests, and to try to find appropriate answers to them.

Constant discoveries in the genetics field have greatly increased the number of genetic tests on the market and that trend is undoubtedly going to develop further. The June 2007 European Congress of Human Genetics showed the importance of these discoveries and the attendant issues as regards new diagnostic and therapeutic prospects. While recent developments are undeniably an advance in terms of human health, it is also important to weigh up the other implications, in particular the ethical ones. These are concerns to which Europeans are not indifferent: some years ago, while acknowledging the usefulness of genetic tests (72%), they were already expressing worries (60%) about the consequences (Eurobarometer 1999).

With the current growth in commercial availability of genetic tests outside the health system, it is important to look into the implications for individuals (ill or not), health professionals and health systems as a whole and to consider what national and European responses would be appropriate. In future, tests could be a way of optimising medical treatment with the help of pharmacogenetics. The ethical and social implications of these developments have likewise to be considered.

Researchers, clinicians and representatives of industry, patients, health consumers and decision-making bodies will be looking at all these aspects at the European seminar, "Freely available genetic tests and pharmacogenetics: the individual and collective issues in Europe", which the Council of Europe, the French Ministry of Health and France's Agency for Biomedicine are jointly holding in Paris on 2 October.

./..

[1] The seminar will concern itself solely with the type of genetic test capable of diagnosing an illness or identifying predisposition to certain illnesses. It will not be dealing with antenatal tests (prenatal diagnosis (PND) or preimplant diagnosis (PID)), gender identification at six weeks, paternity tests or tests performed in connection with judicial proceedings.

Contact persons for the French press :
Plan créatif Corporate pour l'Agence de la biomédecine: Rachel Brunella on 01 43 70 40 03
Agence de la biomédecine: Bénédicte Vincent on 01 55 93 69 34
Contact person for the international press :
Council of Europe: Henriette Girard (Tel. 33 (0)3 88 41 21 41 ; Henriette.girard@coe.int)