Paraplegia

Report

Report on a Conference Council for the International Organization of Medical Sciences (CIOMS)

The CIOMS consists of delegates from medical, scientific, social and other related fields to discuss international academic and political affairs, concerning human welfare.

The 24th CIOMS conference was held from 22-27 July 1990 in Tokyo and Inuyama City Japan, co-sponsored by WHO and UNESCO. About 100 participants from 24 countries met together in the hall of Science Council of Japan.

The subjects were Human Gene Mapping, Genetic Screening and Therapy. Because of gene mapping, many diseases such as haemolytic anaemia, phenylketonuria (haemophilia), etc. have been recognised as diseases related to genetic abnormality, and now abnormal genes on the DNA caused by environmental risk factors are concerned in the development of carcinomas, diabetes mellitus, Alzheimer's disease and some other psychiatric disorders.

The rapid progress of molecular biology techniques such as human gene mapping and its application are expected to contribute to knowledge about human biology and disease, but also causing some anxiety of the potential abuse of this new knowledge.

At the final session in Inuyama City, the conference agreed on a Declaration.

The declaration of Inuyama

1. Efforts to map the human genome are eminently worthwhile to benefit human health, but what must be assured is that the knowledge gained will be used appropriately.
2. Every misconception of genetic knowledge can be corrected by education of the public and by open discussion.
3. Present genetic research and services do not raise unique or even novel issues and rapidity of advances in genetic knowledge and technology accentuate a true need for ethical sensitivity in policy making.
4. The central objective of genetic screening and diagnosis should always guard the welfare of the person tested. Test results must always be protected against unconsented disclosure.
5. Particular attention by independent ethical review committees is necessary, especially when gene therapy involves children. Interventions should be limited to conditions that cause significant disability.
6. Human germ-line therapy is technically difficult at present but before it is undertaken, its safety must be very well established, for changes in germ cells would affect the descendants of patients.

7. Genetic researchers and therapists have a responsibility to ensure that the techniques they develop are used ethically.
8. The developing countries should receive their due share of the benefits that result from the human genome project.

Dr Eiji Iwatsubo, MD
Japanese Corresponding Secretary
and Member of Scientific Committee
of IMSOP