

## Press Release

from North Health Ethics Committee Y's

North Health Ethics Committee Y at a meeting on 14 May 1997 considered and approved a gene therapy research proposal for the treatment of Canavan's Disease submitted by Professor Matthew During. This is the second such proposal received and approved by the Committee.

The proposal was submitted to the Ethics Committee earlier this year. However the Committee suspended consideration of the proposal until it had been assessed and approved, on scientific grounds, by the Gene Technology Advisory Committee.

During the period prior to the meeting on 14 May, the Ethics Committee contacted the parents of the eight children involved to discuss their child's participation in the gene therapy trial. As a result of their

enquiries, the Committee was satisfied that all of the parents are well informed and competent to give consent for their children to be included in the gene therapy proposal.

The Committee considered all of the ethical issues involved and gave ethical approval for the gene therapy to proceed. The children, all from overseas, are due to be treated in Auckland in the near future.

The Committee has also received regular reports about the two children who received similar treatment in Auckland in 1996. Reports from Physicians and therapists responsible for the on-going care of the children are cautiously optimistic about the potential benefits of the gene therapy research.

## Essay Competition

The University of Otago Press, which produces the *Otago Bioethics Report*, also publishes the New Zealand literary and arts journal *Landfall*. In 1997 we are celebrating *Landfall's* fiftieth anniversary.

As part of the celebration, the *Landfall* essay competition is being held. This is open to any New Zealand resident wishing to write on a subject of their choosing. For more details, contact P. Jamieson, University of Otago Press, PO Box 56, Dunedin or email: philippa.jamieson@stonebow.ac.nz.

