

the seven most important questions from their deliberations. These were considered at the third weekend which was a conference open to the public with each question addressed by invited speakers and discussed in open session. A report was then prepared by the 16 members.

Both panel members, Ian Shields and Moira Scammell, spoke enthusiastically about the conference. Both talked about the need to educate and better inform the public. Both talked about the 'fear of the unknown' and the modification of this fear with accurate information. Both still expressed concerns.

The afternoon session concluded with the people who chaired each session giving a brief summary of the main points before the floor was opened to comment and debate. Maybe at this late stage of the day thoughts were turned to satisfying the inner man as the debated points were fewer than I had

expected. However, the few were lively!

The evening public session attracted a solid number but could not be called 'standing room only' density. It was opened by Professor Sutherland who basically presented a précis version of his earlier address, emphasising the international perspectives in genome science. Dr James Maryanski addressed the USFDA policy for safety and labelling of foods developed using genetic engineering. Ian Johnstone chaired a group of three speakers: a representative of the Maruia Society asked 'Genetic Engineering - should the public accept it?'; Professor A Richard Bellamy, Director, School of Biological Sciences, University of Auckland addressed the statement 'DNA Technology: public benefit versus perceived risks'; and Ms Kay Weir, editor of *Pacific World* and executive member of the Pacific Institute of Resource Management discussed 'The risks inherent in genetic engineering technology'.

Professor Peterson then presented his 'Highlights from the Conference' followed by the final panel discussion which attracted a few passionate comments from some members of the audience. But, in general the late hour and a long day's proceedings seemed to preclude any lengthy debate. (On reflection a sympathetic chair contributed substantially!)

So concluded a day of wide-ranging discourse. The main benefit I think most in attendance would concur with was the clear message that the public must be the target of heightened awareness and efficient educational programmes. The gene technologies are here now and how we deal with them is a matter that, in an informed way, should concern us all.

My final observation is, perhaps, frivolous. To make these decisions I hope we don't all have to take to wearing corporate suits!

## At the Centre

The big news at the Centre is the arrival of our new director, Professor Donald Evans. Donald started work at the beginning of October and the Centre has already benefited from his energy and experience. Donald will be giving his University of Otago Inaugural Professorial Lecture during the Centre's conference next February. The Lecture will be held on Friday 13 February 1998.

Although all the Centre staff are looking forward to the direction and leadership that Donald will bring to the Centre we are grateful for the presence of Professor Gareth Jones in the interim, between directors. We have been fortunate to have the skills and experience of Professor Gareth Jones as acting Director.

The medical curriculum at Otago Medical School continues to evolve. The first year of the new preclinical course (med two and three) is nearly over. Most of the Centre's ethics teaching in the preclinical course has been in the Doctor, Patient and Society module. We have also been involved in 'Systems Integration Days'. These are one of the most exciting components of the new curriculum. Essentially they involve input from relevant departments within the medical school to a specific illness. We do not have full student evaluations in from these sessions yet,

however, from the perspective of those involved in the teaching of these sessions, integrating ethics teaching into the hard science areas of the medical curriculum was a fruitful way to teach medical ethics.

An exciting initiative that Barbara Nicholas and Lynley Anderson have developed, in conjunction with the Education Technology Support Services, is a video titled 'Living with Haemophilia'. The video is of members of the Haemophilia Society talking about the impact that haemophilia has made upon their lives and is being used to extend students' understanding of narrative ethics. Readers interested in finding out more about the video should contact Barbara Nicholas or Lynley Anderson at the Bioethics Centre, Dunedin School of Medicine, PO Box 913, Dunedin.

Nicola Collie has joined the team at the Centre. She comes to the Centre after recently completing a Master of Sciences degree in biochemistry at the University of Otago. Most of Nicola's work at the Centre involves assisting Barbara Nicholas in her research work. Nicola has also been handling requests for information on particular topics in Bioethics, so readers who write requesting material on particular topics will now have the benefit of utilising Nicola's research expertise.