

# ***TA-SWISS***

## **The Swiss Centre for Technology Assessment**

**The TA-SWISS Projects on Biomedical Research,  
an overview**

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# The domains of TA-SWISS

- Information Society
- Mobility
- **Biotechnology and Medicine**

*Research involving human beings*

# Research involving human beings



## TA-SWISS Studies

## PubliForum or publifocus

- Genetic diagnosis (97)

- Somatic gene therapy (99)

- Xenotransplantation (98)
- Cellular Xenotransplantation (01)

- Human Stem Cells (02)

- Pharmacogenomics and Pharmacogenetics (04)

- Transplantation Medicine (00)

- Embryonic Stem Cells (02)

- In-vitro fertilisation (03)

- Research involving human beings (04)

# Transplantation Medicine

## TA-SWISS PROJECTS

- 98 Xenotransplantation
- 99 - 00 Cellular Xenotransplantation
- end 00 PubliForum Transplantation Medicine
- mid 01 Colloquium PubliForum
- Sept. 03 Presentation of the PubliForum results to the Parliamentary Commissions

## POLITICAL AGENDA

- 96–97 Start of the political debate
- 99 The Article on “Transplantation Medicine” is imbedded in the Federal Constitution  
Consultation of draft version
- 01 Bill accepted by Government and passed to Parliament
- end 03 First discussions in Parliament

# TA-SWISS: Study Xenotransplantation 1998

## Recommandations

### Research

- safety measures, assessment of infection risks
- research about transplant rejection
- independent experts panel to define requirements and evaluate results

### Legislation

- each clinical trial is subjected to approval by a panel of experts

### Public debate

- organisation of public debates needed (e.g. PubliForum)

# PubliForum: Transplantation Medicine 2000

## Recommendations

<b>Information</b>	→	active information policy
<b>Psychological care</b>	→	support for donors and relatives
<b>Research</b>	→	search for alternatives
<b>Organs allocation</b>	→	priority to medical criteria for waiting lists
<b>Organs donation</b>	→	extent consent model: approval by donor or next of kin
<b>Moratorium</b>	→	not necessary; present regulation sufficient

Basically, transplantation was judged positively, however the questions raised must be taken seriously

# TA-SWISS: Study Xenotransplantation of cells 2000

## Important points

- Infection risks** → possible danger of infections, from diseases previously restricted to animals
- Transplant rejection** → more research needed
- Genetically modified cell lines** → offer alternatives only in limited domains
- Animal «sources»** → large number required: ethical problem

# Stem Cells

## TA-SWISS PROJECTS

- Aug. 01** Study on human stem cells begins
- Dec. 01** Meeting with politicians
- April 02** Intermediate report published
- Mai 02** publifocus takes place
- June 02** publifocus report published
- Feb.03** Final report published

## POLITICAL AGENDA

- Law project research on human beings
- Nov. 01** Federal Council divides the law on embryos and embryonic stem cells
- Aug. 03** Draft version of law circulated for consultation
- Nov. 03** Bill accepted by Government and passed to Parliament
- 2003** Law discussed in Parliament

# TA-SWISS: Study Human Stem Cells 2001

## Recommandations

### Research

- research on embryonic stem cells is still at its beginning, but possibility of new therapy concepts – chances for science and economy

### Legislation

- options for legislation of embryonic stem cells research

### Public debate

- discussion should not be limited to embryonic stem cells (adult stem cells)
- importance of ethical and moral aspects: other areas of biomedicine could be affected (pre-implantation diagnosis, abortion...)

# Publifocus: Research Embryonic Stem Cells 2002

## All participants agreed about

- **Import of embryonic stem cells** → not allowed, if production is prohibited in Switzerland
- **Economic arguments** → not sufficient to justify embryonic stem cells research

## Participants have divergent opinions about

- Notion of “beginning of life” and the status of the embryo: ethical aspect
- Destiny of redundant embryos
- Therapeutic cloning

Due to the therapeutical potential, research on embryonic stem cells is supported; however strong ethical questions about «life-to-be»

# PubliForum: Research on human beings

## Examples of issues proposed to the citizens panel

- Clinical tests
- Research with embryos and foeti
- How to deal with biological material (placenta, blood from umbilical cord, tissues)
- The use of medical data collected for other purposes (blood tests)
- Research with persons with limited self determination (children, adolescent, mentaly handicaped)
- Research in social sciences

# Overall Conclusions

**Technology Assessment in Biotechnology and Medicine is important in regard to**

- uncertainties in a fast developing field
- need for regulations which reduces risks and allows research
- large public interest in ethical and social aspects

**TA-SWISS can contribute to the decision making process by supporting**

- political commissions during legislation
- other stakeholders

If benefits are foreseeable and risks can be limited, the attitude from informed lay people towards new developments in biomedicine is positive