

Press Release

Wednesday 13th August 2008

Body Shopping: Who Owns Your Body?

Human tissues and body parts are big business. Eggs, blood, bone, cell cultures, genes, and a host of other body products circulate in a global market worth millions of dollars. But while commercial organisations reap the profits, the individuals and communities who originally called these body parts their own often receive no reward for their contribution, and have no say over the uses to which their body parts are put.

In her new book *Body Shopping: The Economy Fuelled by Flesh and Blood*, Professor Donna Dickenson reveals the shocking extent to which our bodies are being turned into commodities, and makes clear the ethical, legal and social issues this raises.

In a high-profile event at the Edinburgh International Book Festival, Professor Dickenson will discuss her book with audience members and with two fellow experts in the legal and ethical issues around the disposal and commodification of human tissues, Professor James Ironside and Professor Graeme Laurie.

The "Body Shopping" event takes place at the Spiegeltent on Wednesday 13 August 2008 at 7 pm.

Tickets are available either through the Edinburgh International Book Festival website (www.edbookfest.co.uk) or by phone on 0845 373 5888.

Contact:

Clare de Mowbray, Project Officer
ESRC Genomics Policy and Research Forum
The University of Edinburgh
College of Humanities and Social Science
St John's Land
Holyrood Road
Edinburgh EH8 8AQ

c.demowbray@ed.ac.uk
0131 651 4736

Note to Editors:

Donna Dickenson is Professor Emerita of Medical Ethics and Humanities at the University of London, and the first woman recipient of the International Spinoza Lens award for her contribution to public debate on ethics.

James Ironside is Professor of Clinical Neuropathology in The University of Edinburgh, an Honorary Consultant Neuropathologist in the Lothian Health University Hospital, and Deputy Chair of the Human Tissue Authority, the statutory body responsible for overseeing the operation of the Human Tissue Act, which regulates the storage and use of human body parts.

Graeme Laurie is Professor of Medical Jurisprudence in The University of Edinburgh, Chair of the permanent Ethics and Governance Council of UK Biobank, and Chair of NHS Scotland's Privacy Advisory Committee.

Established in August 2004, the ESRC Genomics Policy and Research Forum is a novel initiative in the field of social science research.

As part of the ESRC Genomics Network (EGN), the Forum acts to integrate the diverse strands of social science research within and beyond the EGN; to develop links between social scientists and scientists working across the entire range of genomic science and technology; and to connect research in this area to policy makers, business, the media and civil society in the UK and abroad.

This is a novel and challenging role, but one which presents huge opportunities. Under the Directorship of Professor Steve Yearley and the Deputy Directorship of Dr Steve Sturdy, the Forum is widening the reception of social science research beyond existing audiences, and building capacity amongst social scientists for public and policy engagement.

The Genomics Forum aims:

- to exploit synergies across the EGN and other relevant ESRC initiatives
- to encourage fruitful interaction between social scientists and scientists working on genomics, both nationally and globally
- to connect social science research on genomics with public policy debates and decision making, and with policy makers, business, the media and civil society, in the UK and abroad
- to develop new lines of engagement between social scientists, biomedical scientists, policy-makers and publics

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) is the UK's largest funding agency for research and postgraduate training relating to social and economic issues. It supports independent, high quality research which impacts on business, the public sector and the third sector. The ESRC's planned total expenditure in 2008/09 is £203 million. At any one time the ESRC supports over 4,000 researchers and postgraduate students in academic institutions and research policy institutes. More at www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk