



Universität
Basel

Research Project

Identifying strategies to approach ethical issues with dual-use research of concern in Switzerland

Third-party funded project

Project title Identifying strategies to approach ethical issues with dual-use research of concern in Switzerland

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Organisation / Research unit

Ethik / Bio- und Medizinethik (Elger)

Department

Project Website <http://ibmb.unibas.ch/research/dual-use-research/>

Project start 01.01.2016

Probable end 31.12.2017

Status Completed

Dual-use research of concern (DURC) refers to research that may be used for good and harmful purposes. The term dual-use initially described security threats associated with the use of engineering and information technologies for military purposes. It was only recently that the dual-use potential of life science research entered the spotlight, when in 2002, merely months after the anthrax attacks in the US, scientists published how to re-create polio virus from scratch based on its published sequence. Their research initiated a controversial debate on biosecurity and biosafety threats associated with life science research. Since then further examples of dual-use life science research have provoked an international echo, including the recent case of novel man-made influenza strains.

So far, US-based scientists and security experts have dominated the debate around DURC in the life sciences. Few ethicists have joined the discussion. An interdisciplinary examination of the topic using empirical data that goes beyond general ideas about DURC is urgently needed. Data based on concrete situations/examples and scenarios will help to ensure an accurate, accountable and evidence-based process for identifying appropriate governance options.

This project will provide the required empirically-based ethical analysis of the DURC dilemma. It will collect much needed empirical data on the awareness, views and perspectives of the various Swiss actors involved based on realistic case scenarios. It will also identify current policies and guidelines around the world dealing with DURC, and suggest suitable DURC governance options for Switzerland. Finally, the collected data will offer a basis for a subsequent normative ethical analysis.

Keywords Ethics

Financed by

Foundations and Associations

Add publication

Add documents

Specify cooperation partners