

OUR GOALS

PROMOTE THE RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT AND USE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Science and technology provide fundamental benefits to society and are central to the protection and promotion of health and well-being. For science to continue in this role, however, mechanisms must be in place to make sure that science is used appropriately, particularly as society crosses new frontiers in such areas as genetics and cloning research.

TO PROTECT THE INTEGRITY OF SCIENCE, AAAS WORKS TO:

Define and Guide Responsible Conduct of Research

AAAS works with the scientific community and other organizations to identify what constitutes responsible research conduct and the proper uses of science, and promotes a culture of high ethical standards among current and future researchers.

Inform Societal Discourse on Ethical Implications of Research

AAAS informs policymakers and other national leaders of the scientific opportunities and limitations associated with new research findings, alerting society to the social implications of scientific and technological advances, and helping to identify and discuss in public forums what constitutes responsible research conduct and uses of science.

Promote the Verification of Research Findings

AAAS supports the system of peer review as an important means of protecting the credibility of the research enterprise. Peer review confirms whether information is verifiable and accurate, allowing both scientists and the public to assess the potential of new research, and enabling policymakers to consider its value in the formulation and implementation of public policy.

Defend Free Scientific Inquiry

The success of scientific research is dependent on openness and on the ability of scientists to operate in an atmosphere that supports free inquiry. AAAS speaks out against those who seek to restrict scientific freedom and works with others in the scientific community to address human rights abuses directed against scientists throughout the world.

STRATEGIES IN ACTION

The following are among the recent and ongoing activities of AAAS in 2001 that demonstrate its commitment to promoting responsible conduct and use of science and technology:

Bringing Scientific Expertise into the Courts

In 2001, AAAS took on its first case in a project designed to help federal judges find well-respected, qualified engineers and scientists to serve as expert witnesses. Known as CASE, for Court Appointed Scientific Experts, the project was developed under the aegis of the National Conference of Lawyers and Scientists (NCLS), a joint committee of AAAS and the American Bar Association's Science and Technology Law Section.

Judges have had the formal authority to appoint their own experts since 1975. And, since 1993, a U.S. Supreme Court ruling has required the federal judiciary to take steps to exclude unreliable testimony from the courtroom. The CASE project is an effort to alleviate the burden placed on the judiciary and to address the increasing level of complexity in cases.

Guidance in Policymaking on Stem Cell Research

The debate over whether the federal government should fund research on embryonic stem cells reopened in earnest in 2001, and policymakers needed help gathering all available information on this complex topic. AAAS stepped up to the plate.

In a letter dated 6 March, three officers of the AAAS Board wrote to U.S. President George W. Bush in support of federal funding for stem cell research, including cells from embryonic, fetal, and adult sources. The letter responded to President Bush's order for a review of a Clinton Administration decision that allowed funding of research on embryonic stem cells under guidelines that were published in the Federal Register in August 2000: "It would be tragic to squander this opportunity to pursue work that can potentially help millions of Americans in need," wrote Mary L. Good, Peter H. Raven, and Floyd E. Bloom, who were then chair, president and president-elect of the AAAS Board of Directors.

Five months later, a week after President Bush announced his policy in a nationally-televised speech on 9 August, AAAS again provided a measured response to the President's stem cell policy, this time recommending that the Bush Administration publicly disclose the sources of the existing embryonic stem cell lines that constitute the centerpiece of that policy. The Association noted that only by such disclosure can scientists assess the potential value of the cells for research and potential medical advances.

Addressing Human Rights Abuses

As prosecutors prepared for the trial of former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic in late 2001, they had in hand a document from AAAS that implicated Milosevic's forces in the killings of 10,000 people and the displacement of thousands of refugees in Kosovo in 1999.

Patrick Ball, a statistician and deputy director of the AAAS Science and Human Rights Program, had been asked to testify in Milosevic's trial, providing an analysis of data gathered from exhumation records, Albanian border records on refugee crossings, and interviews with thousands of refugees.

The 67-page report, which applied highly sophisticated statistical and computer programming tools, was produced with help from the American Bar Association's Central and East European Law Initiative. It was the latest of AAAS's efforts to apply science to the promotion of human rights.

"The findings of this study are consistent with the hypothesis that action by Yugoslav forces was the cause of the killings and the refugee flow," Ball and his co-authors wrote in their report to the war crimes tribunal, *Killings and Refugee Flow in Kosovo: March-June 1999*.



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Killings and Refugee Flow in Kosovo: March-June 1999.