



Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri

NATIONAL BIOETHICS COMMITTEE

ETHICS COMMITTEES IN ITALY: RECENT ISSUES

(18th April 1997)

abstract

The opinion updates the observations contained in the previous document "Ethics Committees" (1992).

The NBC confirms the fundamental formative and interdisciplinary experience of Ethics Committees and believes it important to underline the distinction between two functions (the ethics of clinical and medical care and that of biomedical research) which ethics committees can carry out separately or jointly. However it recognises that these functions can be comprised under the same name, even in order to assimilate the local experiences which have been arranged according to this prospective.

It also points out that the opinions of ethics committees must never be binding, even when they are deemed obligatory (as in the case of projects regarding experimentation). Furthermore, it is considered important to emphasise that ethics committees need to be substantially independent even in relation to possible promoting bodies and hierarchical connections between existing ethics committees should be excluded.