CRISPR/Cas9 workshop

Wrap-up session

Carla Saenz, PhD
Regional Bioethics Advisor
CRISPR-Cas9 for genome editing

• Great potential overall

• Ethical challenges in germ line: transformative nature of technology implies risks for future generations
  – What to do? How to assess risks?

• In region:
  – Risk of revamped racism and discrimination
  – Lack of laws and regs taken advantage of
  – “Backwards” laws in the works
What to do?

Consensus as a starting point:

• Nothing should be automatically ruled in or out before it has been fully explored
  = no simple solution does the work
  = no “general law,” no “moratorium”

• Case by case evaluation is indispensible
  – Informed by correct understanding of science: We will need to trust experts

How can we get there?
Procedural approach

1. Process of ethical arbitrage to ensure responsible governance:
   – Rigorous evaluation of each case
     • Risks and benefits
     • Consensual assessment of risks (region? global? – wide impact)
   – Legitimacy

2. Engagement
   – Foster wide dialogue, include civil society
   – Accuracy, effectiveness – and equity
Can we build on the “lessons learned” in other areas of research ethics?

– Stay away from categorical prohibitions or overregulation that cancels the potential of this technologies while ensuring research/use of technologies is ethical (responsible)

– Figure out early: what is right from a legal / regulatory perspective
  • *Ni tanto que queme al santo*…
  • Avoid “predatory” practices while allowing for thorough case by case evaluation
Can we build on the “lessons learned” in other areas of research ethics?

• Need to provide meaningful guidance
• Need to enhance trust in each element of the research ethics system
  – Productive collaboration
  – Proactively inform the population

Goal: How can we catalyze ethical research / use of research?

• Offer: PAHO Biethics: Forum to discuss these issues, raise awareness, advance consensus