



The Centre for Biomedicine & Society (CBAS) 2007-2008 Winter Seminar Series

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Tuesday 27 November 2007 17.00-18.30, Safra Lecture Theatre, Strand, King's College London

The commercial exploitation of biomedical research: are we really seeing the emergence of a new bioeconomy?

Dr Paul Martin, University of Nottingham; Chair, Prof Steven Wainwright, CBAS; Discussant, Dr Chris Mason, UCL

Abstract: Biotechnology has been heralded as ushering in an era of unprecedented innovation in the biosciences, resulting in a wave of novel diagnostics and therapeutics that are expected to transform healthcare. In order to facilitate these changes academia, industry and clinical medicine have been brought into a new alignment with each other under the mantle of 'translational medicine'. A number of policymakers and social scientists have claimed that this will provide the foundation for the development of a 'bioeconomy' that will drive economic growth in the 21st century. This presentation will map the contours of these important changes and explore the current progress in transforming new biological knowledge into effective medical technologies and commercially viable products. It will be argued that whilst there has been a major shift in the production of biomedical knowledge this has not been matched by similar changes in healthcare or the profitability of the biotechnology industry. Furthermore, this calls into question ideas such as personalised medicine based on pharmacogenetics and genetic risk profiling. The reasons for this lack of progress will be analysed and the implications for public policy, innovation studies and social theory will be explored.

Biography: Dr Paul Martin is Reader in Science & Technology Studies and Deputy Director of the Institute for Science & Society (ISS) at the University of Nottingham. He trained as a molecular biologist and subsequently worked as a health policy analyst before taking a PhD in science and technology studies at the University of Sussex. His research interests cover innovation in the biotechnology industry, the social and ethical issues raised by genetics and the regulation of new medical technologies. Recent grants include studies of the impact of genomics on innovation in the pharmaceutical industry (ESRC), expectations of haematopoietic stem cell technology (ESRC) and the clinical uptake of regenerative medicine products (EPSRC). Recent publications include a review of progress in genomic medicine for the Royal Pharmaceutical Society and a major report on the development of pharmacogenetics.

Tuesday 8 January 2008 - 17.00-18.30 Safra Lecture Theatre, Strand, King's

Science as a vacation? Principles of medical tourism, trafficking and migration

Dr Charis Thompson, University of California, Berkeley, USA; Chair, Prof Clare Williams, CBAS

Abstract: In this talk I attempt to bring together work on three interrelated phenomena: medical tourism, with its emphasis on the movement of empowered, biosocial citizens seeking medical care by travelling down scientific, regulatory and / or economic gradients, and on the development by entrepreneurs and governments of medical infrastructure as a form of vacation destination that earns foreign exchange and creates a new sector of the labor market; medical migrations, which focuses on movements within and across national boundaries, where medical needs are essentialized or averted in ways relating to immigration or migrant status and the freedom from various kinds of persecution; and medical trafficking, which emphasizes those living in the global south and those living low income lives in the global north who are increasingly forced to or opt to become sources of biological resource for the wealthy. I ask whether it is possible to combine the insights of all three, and suggest ways of doing so. I then compare this kind of inquiry, which I argue is necessary to understand contemporary developments in biomedicine and biotechnology, to the long-standing ideology of science as value-neutral and the same in all places at all times, whose pursuit is no less than, in Max Weber's words, a "vocation," and argue that once science is a vacation, rather than a vocation, a clean separation of the calling of the scientist and the implication of the demos is no longer possible.

Biography: Dr Charis Thompson is Associate Professor in the Departments of Rhetoric and Gender and Women's Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. She is Director of the Berkeley Science, Technology, and Society Center, and of the Designated Emphasis in Women, Gender, and Sexuality. She is also the Director of the Project on Stem Cells and Society at Berkeley's Stem Cell Center. Thompson is the author of *Making Parents: The Ontological Choreography of Reproductive Technologies* (MIT Press 2005), which won the 2007 Rachel Carson Prize from the Society for the Social Study of Science, and of numerous articles on reproductive and stem cell technologies.