

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



The ethics of medicine

An international bio-ethics expert is in Tasmania this week to discuss the ethics of modern health care.

Dr Henk ten Have is the Director of UNESCO's Ethics of Science and Technology Division in Paris. His team helps nations worldwide to develop solutions to the bioethical problems that are now a major part of all modern health care.

"In Australia you have committees, experts, legislation. Public debate. Even if you don't know the answers to your ethical problems, you have a system in place that gives you a way to start solving them," said Dr ten Have.

But Dr ten Have said that in almost all of the world's 192 sovereign nations, there is no such system.

"In Kenya, for instance, 60 per cent of all medications are fake. But there is no system in place for Kenya to try and deal with the ethical legislation or its implications," he said.

And while there are many basic, human principles which are universal, their implication into different cultures can be complicated.

"For instance, the issue of 'consent' is an understood concept in Western countries. It's a contract between a health researcher and a participant - I give my consent for you to use my medical data in your study.

"In some Arab nations, the law gives a woman's husband a right to give or withhold that consent. In some Pacific nations, consent has to be given by a group, on a local level."

"It's not a case of using other systems - many countries don't want to simply "import" a set of ideals, which might not even work, culturally.

Dr ten Have says UNESCO has made African and Arab nations a high priority.

Dr ten Have is in Tasmania to give the first-ever Red Cross Oration - a public lecture supported by Red Cross Australia. He will give the same lecture in Launceston the next evening.

WHAT: **Inaugural Red Cross Oration (Public Lecture)**
The Challenge of Bioethics in a Globalised World
Dr Henk Ten Have,
Director Division of Ethics of Science and Technology, UNESCO, Paris

WHEN: **HOBART: Wednesday, 31 January – 6pm**
LAUNCESTON: Thursday 1 February – 6.30 pm

WHERE: **HOBART: Stanley Burbury Theatre**
LAUNCESTON: Sir Raymond Ferrall Centre

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