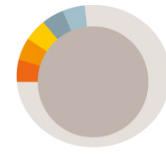


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Bridging law and science and following ethical guidance

Victor Demaria-Pesce, Relations with European and French Parliaments; General Directorate of INSERM

INSERM is a French medical research national agency. About 7,000 people work in more than 600 research units. My job within this agency consists in taking care of relations with both European and French parliaments. Is it lobbying? It would be better described in terms of building bridges between the world of biomedical research and parliaments. Scientists and legislators do not indeed share the same language. Moreover, MPs sometimes need scientific elements to shed light on difficult matters.

When scientists are able to provide the legislator with insights, data about risks assessment or evidences, they can be very helpful in solving public dilemmas. We are committed to bring to parliaments the best expertise we can. Moreover, it happens that the frontier separating what is known from what is unknown has to be underlined to be clear.

The most sensitive cases are brought by situations in which a political community is potentially exposed to risks that are almost impossible to accurately assess. But public authorities have to shoulder their responsibilities whatever happens.

In the field of biomedical research, it is expected to make projects progress from basic investigations to clinical applications as fast as possible. But patients must benefit from the research progress in the safest way for them.

Scientists constantly communicate with each other through publications. Nevertheless, the general public must know what science makes possible. Following this perspective, the responsibility of scientists can be quite overlapped with those of educators.

In sensitive matters we have to balance our duty of transparency with the necessity to avoid a communication that could cause fear. Human rights and respect of individual freedom are our cardinal values. If the related basic ethical principles are widely shared, it will be easier for all to move forward.