Biotechnology Research in an Age of Terrorism

Description

Link to National Academies Report, *Biotechnology Research in an Age of Terrorism*

Body

In recent years much has happened to justify an examination of biological research in light of national security concerns. The destructive application of biotechnology research includes activities such as spreading common pathogens or transforming them into even more lethal forms. Policymakers and the scientific community at large must put forth a vigorous and immediate response to this challenge. This new book by the National Research Council recommends that the government expand existing regulations and rely on self-governance by scientists rather than adopt intrusive new policies. One key recommendation of the report is that the government should not attempt to regulate scientific publishing but should trust scientists and journals to screen their papers for security risks, a task some journals have already taken up. With biological information and tools widely distributed, regulating only U.S. researchers would have little effect. A new International Forum on Biosecurity should encourage the adoption of similar measures around the world. Seven types of risky studies would require approval by the Institutional Biosafety Committees that already oversee recombinant DNA research at some 400 U.S. institutions. These experiments of concern include making an infectious agent more lethal and rendering vaccines powerless.

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