

# Dissemination and Communication

# Sensitive information?

- Classified – ‘sensitive’ – open
- Sensitive if the benefits of limiting its dissemination exceed the costs of controlling it
- But can cost/benefit analysis be done (pseudo quantitative approach but problem is quantifying parameters)?
- If control, then who controls, who has access and when?

# Publisher perspective

- Traditional publishers are now web information specialists
- Pressures to publish faster, more globally, reduce access controls
- Practically every biomedical article will be published somewhere
- 315k biomedical articles per year
- Once peer-reviewed and published or on-line then too late to control

# New publication/dissemination paradigms

- Open access peer reviewed journals
- Institutional repositories – pre and post prints
- personal web pages
- Theses and grey literature on line
- Currently 169 research/institutional repositories – contents sometimes vetted by faculty

# Points of agreement

- The benefits of increasing access to information and openness in science are enormous
- 'sensitive' information does exist but cannot restrict fundamental research at the end of the research chain, i.e. at publication stage – neither desirable nor practicable
- Responsibility and shared ownership of knowledge is better than trying to put walls around it

# Points of agreement

- However public confidence and government concerns must be addressed by scientific community
- Pragmatically we cannot control access but need to demonstrate responsibility
- Multiple check points already exist in research process and can incorporate bio-security concerns
- 'tick-box' at publication stage and an explicit issue to be addressed by peer reviewers
- Need to persuade the public and policy makers of the importance (=social benefit) of universality in science.

# Other issues

- Fundamental/basic scientific knowledge is distinct from applied research, eg weaponization.
- 'Bio' has some special features but other areas, of science, eg nanotech, also could be 'sensitive'
- Knowledge = information + people
- What is the role of scientists in government (or private) programmes – do we want them more open or rather have them classified?
- The current USA biodefense research programme is a 'case in action', where those scientists, Institutions, agencies involved could try and define 'sensitive information' and control mechanisms (but not for the whole of life sciences research!!)