Recommended Citation:
Over the past two decades, a desire for mechanisms to articulate common values and foster consensus about biomedical advances in the face of cultural and religious heterogeneity resulted in the creation of Federal bioethics commissions. In hindsight, clearly some of these efforts have had lasting, measurable impacts. For over a decade, though, no such initiative has been functionally operational.

Recently, however, Congress has renewed its interest in a bioethics commission—signaling, in part, the increasing importance of medical and biological technologies in daily life. In September 1992, Senator Mark O. Hatfield, Ranking Minority, Committee on Appropriations; Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Chairman, Committee on Labor and Human Resources; and Senator Dennis DeConcini, Chairman, Subcommittee on Patents, Copyrights, and Trademarks, Committee on the Judiciary, asked the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) to examine past, broad-based bioethics entities in the context of the question: If Congress decides to create a new Federal bioethics body, what does past experience reveal about which particular factors promote success and which should be avoided?

OTA prepared *Biomedical Ethics in U.S. Public Policy* with the assistance of workshop participants, contractors, and reviewers selected for their expertise and diverse points of view. Additionally, scores of individuals cooperated with OTA staff through interviews or by providing written material. OTA gratefully acknowledges the contribution of each of these individuals. As with all OTA Reports, however, responsibility for the content is OTA’s alone.

The Report reviews the history of four Federal bioethics initiatives: the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, the Ethics Advisory Board, the President’s Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine and Biomedical and Behavioral Research, and the Biomedical Ethics Advisory Committee. Today, as Congress considers whether to create a new Federal bioethics body, it can be guided by considering the strengths and weaknesses of these efforts. We believe that lessons from the past will prove instructive for the future. As the frontiers of biomedical research and technology continue to advance, it will become increasingly important for policymakers and the public to understand the ethical implications of such innovation.

Roger C. Herdman, Director
Workshop Participants

David Blumenthal, *Workshop Chair*
Massachusetts General Hospital
Boston, MA

Adrienne Asch
Boston University School of Social Work
Boston, MA

Alexander M. Capron
University of Southern California Law Center
Los Angeles, CA

Robert M. Cook-Deegan
Institute of Medicine
Washington, DC

Ruth R. Faden
Johns Hopkins University School of Hygiene and Public Health
Baltimore, MD

John C. Fletcher
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, VA

Jonathan Glover
Oxford University
Oxford, United Kingdom

Patricia A. King
Georgetown University Law Center
Washington, DC

Bartha Maria Knoppers
University of Montreal Law Faculty
Montreal, Canada

Charles R. McCarthy
Kennedy Institute of Ethics
Washington, DC

Ellen H. Moskowitz
The Hastings Center
Briarcliff Manor, NY

Gail J. Povar
George Washington University Medical Center
Washington, DC

Donald W. Seldin
University of Texas Southwestern Medical School
Dallas, TX

David Shapiro
Nuffield Council on Bioethics
London, United Kingdom

Michael S. Yesley
Los Alamos National Laboratory
Los Alamos, NM

NOTE: OTA appreciates and is grateful for the valuable assistance provided by the workshop participants. The workshop participants do not, however, necessarily approve, disapprove, or endorse this report. OTA assumes full responsibility for the report and the accuracy of its contents.
Project Staff

Robyn Y. Nishimi
Project Director

Ellen L. Goode
Research Analyst

Michael Gough
Program Manager
Biological and Behavioral Sciences

Linda Rayford-Journiette
PC Specialist

Jene Lewis
Administrative Secretary

CONTRACTORS

Kathi E. Hanna
Churchton, MD

Constance M. Pechura
Editor
Bethesda, MD

Daniel J. Wikler
University of Wisconsin
Madison, WI

Cecile Parker
Office Administrator