

CCBIO Opinion

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What is Responsible Cancer Research?

The concept of ELSA - Ethical, Legal and Societal Aspects of Science and Technology - which has been central to the profile of CCBIO since its inception, is gradually becoming supplemented and replaced in Europe by the concept Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI). Originally a European Commission invention, RRI was introduced as a so-called crosscutting principle of Horizon 2020, EU's largest funding program for research and innovation. The Research Council of Norway is currently developing its own RRI framework and implementing it in their biotech, nanotech and ICT research programs. RRI is similar to ELSA but places more emphasis on public engagement with science and the ambition to align research agendas with citizens' needs and concerns.

Recently, Strand and Akslen co-authored a "perspectives" piece for the Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association in which they presented key ethical and social dilemmas on the interface between cancer research and policy. In this piece, they introduced the theory on socio-technical imaginaries and discussed how it may be implemented in RRI frameworks. The piece presents and exemplifies the ELSA/RRI profile of CCBIO for a Norwegian medical audience.

The publication process became interesting in itself as the journal argued that we as authors should "take a stance" in the sense of either fully embracing or fully rejecting technology optimism on behalf of cancer research. The search for a balanced position - an optimistic but

critical and reflexive point of view - appeared to be challenging. A very short abstract follows below.

New opportunities in cancer treatment provide health benefits but also risks of higher costs and more prioritization dilemmas. Critical discussion of how cancer research imagines the future can contribute to more responsible research and health policies. Frameworks for responsible research and innovation provide useful concepts for such a discussion. ••

