

The BC Personalized Medicine Initiative and the W. Maurice Young Centre for Applied Ethics are pleased to announce a seminar by

Dr. Rachael Ritchie, D.Phil

Policy Analyst,
Science, Technology and Industry Directorate
Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
Paris, France

Seminar Title:

OECD Perspectives on Biomarkers in Personalised Medicine

Thursday, February 23 at 3:00- 4:00 pm
In the Gordon & Leslie Diamond Family Theatre
BC Cancer Research Centre,
675 West 10th Avenue, Vancouver, BC, V5Z 1L3

Dr Rachael Ritchie is a Policy Analyst with the Science, Technology and Industry Directorate of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris, France. Her principal responsibilities are in biomedicine and health technology policy. She is an internationally trained scientist (BSc, UBC; D.Phil, Oxford) with experience in basic and applied molecular biology applied to human health and marine science. She has spent the last thirteen years in science management and policy development capacities, working to translate science to support economic and social productivity at regional, sectoral and national levels..

Seminar Abstract; Across OECD countries, and in every region in the world, health care costs are rising, and are projected to continue rising. The global population is rising, people are living longer, and chronic and infectious diseases continue to challenge healthcare systems. Novel biomarkers, emerging from a decade of investment in genomics research, offer significant potential to improve health outcomes and reduce total health care costs in the long term. In what is variably termed ‘personalised’, ‘stratified’, or ‘precision’ medicine, biomarkers have the potential to transform much of the current health care model, shifting the focus from a reactive ‘one-size-fits-all’ system to one that is more proactive and precise. In this new, proactive approach, disease or disease susceptibility may be diagnosed earlier, and disease may be controlled or possibly prevented before it starts; and when disease is detected, new biomarker-based diagnostics may be used to develop treatment strategies which are tailored to the characteristics of individual patients. Those countries which succeed in adopting biomarkers within their health systems stand to gain substantial improvements in the health of their citizens, and in the economic performance of their health care systems and supporting industries. Securing the right conditions for the uptake of biomarkers within health systems remains challenging, but achievable. We will present some of these challenges and discuss several policy options which could foster biomarker research, discovery, development, commercialisation and uptake in clinics.