



PatentsInHumans



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What is a patent?

A **patent** is an intellectual property **right**. It allows the rightsholder to **prevent** others making or using a patented technology for commercial purposes for the patent term (20 years).

Patents over **technologies related to the human body** and the **control** they give to rightsholders over access and use of such technologies can pose **bioethical issues**. These include impacts on how we **treat, use and modify our bodies**.

A **patent** gives the rightsholder(s) **control** over the patented technology to determine who can use it, and on what terms it can be used. For patented **health-technologies**, this control could affect **access to & delivery of healthcare**.

Patents can be granted over technologies which:



are in the body
e.g. isolated human genes;



act on the body e.g. elements of diagnostic tests;



treat the body
e.g. medicines;



can be integrated with the body
e.g. medical devices;



can be used to enhance or alter the body
e.g. neuro-technologies.;

The PatentsInHumans project aims to:

1. Understand

to what extent patents (and how these are used) can impact how we can treat, use and modify the human body;

2. Investigate

whether or to what extent such bioethical issues are considered within the patent decision-making and other related systems in Europe;

3. Develop

a new framework for how patent decision-making systems in Europe can engage with and account for the bioethical implications posed by patents over such technologies.



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