

The Future of Science International Conferences with Fondazione Umberto Veronesi



THE FUTURE OF SCIENCE is a cycle of annual international conferences jointly organised by the Fondazione Umberto Veronesi, the Fondazione Silvio Tronchetti Provera, and the Fondazione Giorgio Cini. The aim of the Conferences is to examine the importance of scientific development as a means of improving the quality of our lives, and to delineate a new role for science in the society of the third millennium.

The idea of these conferences springs from an awareness that the problems and dilemmas generated by unrelenting scientific and technological progress are not being adequately discussed in society as a whole. As science exerts an ever more pervasive influence on our lives, society seems ill-informed about the short and long term implications of scientific advance, and in particular is unaware of the social, economic and cultural consequences of the continuous technological revolution. Experts of international renown from various spheres and disciplines have been invited to give their points of view on these issues – which are crucial to the destiny of our society – addressing a public of scientists, philosophers, theologians, industrialists, politicians, economists, journalists, students and others interested in the social, economic and political consequences of constant scientific development.

The 2010 Conference

The Sixth World Conference on The Future of Science will explore another theme of major public interest, and subject of intense scientific enquiry: Viruses, those mysterious and invisible agents responsible for so many human diseases. Speakers of international stature will explain how viruses evolved, how man has coped with viruses in the past, how they enter and take over cells, and how they evade host defenses. They will discuss where new viruses come from, and whether it will be possible for a new virus to destroy the human race. The role of viruses in cancer, the prevention and treatment of pandemic flu and AIDS, and their potential role as therapeutic agents will also be examined.

Viruses are small and relatively simple forms of life that have developed very complex strategies to survive and disseminate. They are obligatory parasites, since they can only multiply within living cells. Nevertheless, they number among the world's biggest killers, now as in the past. The outbreaks of highly lethal viral diseases such as Ebola and Hantavirus have caused great public concern. Viruses also cause many important plant diseases and are responsible for huge losses in crop production in all parts of the world. But viruses can also be allies: they are tools for gene therapy and can be made to work as tumor-killing agents.

The ultimate aim of the Conference is to indicate how science and technology can meet global viral threats by developing new vaccines and new antiviral drugs, and by addressing the economic, political and ethical issues related to the prevention and treatment of viral diseases.