

## **STS 201 consensus conference ideas**

*GMOs and labeling:* While labels for GM foods are commonplace in Europe, they are more controversial in the United States. While some states have passed legislation requiring food labels (such as Vermont), others have rejected similar ballot measures. Should labeling be considered in Wisconsin? If so, what labeling system should we adopt?

*Vaccination and schools:* The rise of the “anti-vaxxer” movement has led to a growing number of under-vaccinated school age children. Are public schools within their rights to ban these children, or do such regulations overstep their authority?

*Drinking age:* The United States is unique in the Western world for having a drinking age of 21 rather than 18. Even within the United States there has been substantial variation in the regulation of alcohol sales, with some states maintaining a drinking age of 18 up until the late 1980s. What does epidemiological data and contemporary neuroscience have to say about the risks and benefits of making alcohol available at a younger age?

*Pediatric medical marijuana:* Medical marijuana for adults is growing in popular acceptance, but its use in pediatric patients raises special concerns about its impact on developing brains and patient consent. Under what conditions, if any should the medical community endorse its use?

*Euthanasia and mental illness:* When it comes to our pets many people think that euthanasia is not only acceptable but also humane, but end of life options for humans remain controversial. What kinds of options, from withdrawing treatment to using drugs to actively end a life, should medical practitioners make available to patients? Does mental illness compromise a patient’s ability to decide to end their life?

*Gender inequities in the technology industry:* In the computer sciences, the number of women employed in the field peaked in the 1980s, and has declined in the decades since. Technology companies such as Google have recently made commitments to diversify their workforce, but how best to tackle this complex issue remains unclear. What are the sources of the gaps between men and women, and what remedies should industry adopt?

*Privatization of spaceflight:* In era of declining federal support for NASA, private companies such as Space X have begun to play a larger role in space exploration. While many have predicted that private partners could help reduce the cost of space flight and bring new technological innovations, others have worried that private investment will further reduce the rationale for public investment in NASA. Could commercial space travel lead to the demise of scientific exploration?