

Dear members of Senate Community Affairs Committee,

Recommendations made to the Government by the Lockhart Committee are a cause of great concern to all who value human life.

Recommendation No 14 of the Lockhart Committee review states: "Use of excess Assisted Reproductive Technologies embryos in research should continue to be permitted, under licence, as under current legislation."

This in itself is regrettable enough, in that human embryos are being commodified and used as guinea pigs. This cannot be justified even if there was some realistic expectation that there could be some benefit from the use of embryos in the cure of certain diseases, which there is not. Successful treatments have only resulted from adult stem cells.

Recommendation No 22: "Fresh ART embryos that are diagnosed by pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (according to the ART guidelines) as being unsuitable for implantation should be permitted to be used, under licence, for research, training and improvements in clinical practice."

Here we are talking about experimentation on allegedly inferior human beings, which smacks of a total disregard and commodification of human life. As with Mr Ian Macfarlane's reported advice to an AusBiotech forum in 2002 to accept a ban on therapeutic cloning "as a tactical measure" and accept a limited access to 'surplus' IVF embryos, in order to "give them a foot in the door on embryo stem cell research", such abuse will lead to further abuses of older human life.

Recommendation No 24 recommends: "transfer of human somatic cell nuclei into animal oocytes.... under licence, for the creation and use of human embryo clones for research, training and clinical application, including the production of human embryonic stem cells...."

The Lockhart Report specifically calls for human-animal embryo clones, relying as they did on the Korean cloning research later exposed as fraudulent.

The legalisation of joining human and animal genetic material in the same embryo, is repulsive to the majority of most right thinking Australians, and ignores the specific scientific advice of the nation's chief scientist, Jim Peacock, who says that the use of animal eggs as part of therapeutic cloning should be banned.

The use of hybrids is no answer to the perceived need of the medical establishment for research into cures for a variety of presently incurable diseases. Neither will it be an improvement on the extraction of human eggs - an invasive, high-risk procedure with potentially grave consequences to the life and health of women, which will be a cause of further abuse of women especially in the developing world.

It has already been shown that the use of adult stem cells has been successful in Brain Cancer, Ovarian Cancer, Lymphoma, Hodgkin's Lymphoma, Multiple Sclerosis, Crohn's Disease, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Systemic Lupus, Stroke, Parkinson's Disease and Limb Gangrene to name just a few.

Please recommend against any further use of embryos for research and training, and for the ban on any form of cloning whatsoever.

Yours sincerely

Angela Martello