

DOCTORS AGAINST CLONING

Letter to the Editor

October 16th 2006

Dear Editor,

As medical professionals, we are concerned by the ethical and scientific misconceptions surrounding the cloning debate.

The central ethical misconception is that cloned embryos are not embryos, and therefore creating them for research does not violate research ethics. That is incorrect, since all embryos created naturally or by cloning or by IVF are living human beings capable of further development.

This political strategy to redefine the cloned embryo was formulated last year by the International Society for Stem Cell Research, and was criticized as 'evasive' by the respected journal Nature (*Playing the name game – stem cell biologists should not try to change the definition of the word 'embryo'*, July, 2005).

Likewise, for political reasons, the Society decided in 2004 to evade negative feelings about 'cloning' by redefining it as 'SCNT' (somatic cell nuclear transfer). This has confused people into thinking that cloning and SCNT are different scientifically and ethically, when in fact these are two terms for the same process.

People need truthful terminology if they are to reach sound ethical conclusions. Cloning (SCNT) does indeed create human embryos solely for research, and that is unethical.

Scientifically, claims about potential benefits from therapeutic cloning have been misleading. For example, Alzheimer's is often raised as potentially curable with stem cells, even though world authorities such as Professor Colin Masters of Melbourne University dismiss such suggestions.

The reality is that no embryonic stem cell treatment has ever been successfully used in humans, for reasons such as tumour formation, while stem cells obtained from adult tissues are safely used in numerous human conditions and for research.

Consequently ***DOCTORS AGAINST CLONING*** will direct public attention to stem cell research that is both ethical and effective.

Yours sincerely,

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