

1/10/ 06 .

Elton Humphery
Community Affairs Committee .
Senate Department.
Parliament House ,
Canberra.

Dear Sir,

The following submission is made in response to the very sensible call from the Committee , on this most serious question. It is difficult to specify any more important social issue , in the history of the race so far , for the question at issue is simply how should human life be managed ?

For reasons which are not demonstrably clear , there is a lobby, derived principally from medical sources, who are intent on pushing the society under the law, to the widest possible use of Stem Cells , including Embryonic Stem Cells , for the purposes of alleviating presently incurable complaints , and apparently , for testing drugs in production . No one can complain about these objectives where Adult Stem Cells are involved, for there has been some significant success in their use in treatment. Nevertheless, this work is still experimental. and for the moment should be understood in that light, especially where law is to be set in place to regulate the operations of the activity for the welfare of society .

An entirely different question arises where Embryonic Stem Cells are proposed as material for experimentation. The simple fact is that the human Embryo is a human being with as much claim to life as a foetus, a baby , a child , a teenager, an adult , or, like the writer , an elderly person with not much change out of octogenarian status . That human life may vary in presentation from embryo to octogenarian status , but does not change its essential identity, an entity of body and soul . Deriving Embryonic Stem Cells from an Embryo, always involves killing the embryo, which is no more acceptable than killing the octogenarian .

An embryo may be obtained by human intercourse, from times impossible to measure . It is the usual source of human embryos and then human beings. It is only in modern times that the embryo may be obtained by ,

(a) Artificial impregnation of sperm into ovary as in the In Vitro Fertilisation Process , where sadly many human beings are left to die , for the sake of the rare embryos which after implantation in the mother's womb, come to fruition as infants. Here, the number of human beings sacrificed for the sake of the few who come to term, highlights the hideousness of the process . There is no principle of life adhered to and no benefit of life exhibited in this process, for the deaths are not considered and those sacrificed to produce a living human being outweigh the benefit of the life produced . That is not considered by mother and father, for they concentrate on the possibility of a birth, very often in circumstances where previously, no birth was possible . They are mollified in their view of things by clinicians who advise that `Spare Embryos ` may be useful should the present apparently successful implant fail , or at a later date , if another child is desired . But , if they were faced with five children in a row , and were told that they might have one, on the understanding that the other four would inevitably die, they would approach the matter very differently.

Our human nature, very often requires much sense and intellectual stimulation, before we appreciate the truth of a matter .

It is a matter of deep concern that the Lockhart Inquiry has proposed ways to reduce consent requirements from women on IVF programmes. The idea is to permit easier access by scientists to so called `Excess Embryos ` Recommendation 29 , suggests developing an appropriate form of consent which may be completed by the responsible person whose excess artificial reproduction technology embryos are available , shortly after a declaration that the embryos are `Excess ` . This is an attempt at sleight of hand in relation to this matter, which seems to pervade the whole Embryonic Stem Cell Issue .

(b) Human Embryos are possible from cloning . Here an ovary donated by a female may have its nucleus removed , and then it is replaced by a donated cell from an adult person to produce an Embryonic Clone of that person .The resulting Human Cell, is an Embryo , a person .

(c) An ovary may be donated by an animal , say a rabbit , and an adult human person may donate a cell with which it is fused and an embryo is possible which is an animal – human hybrid. The processes involved in bestiality come inevitably to mind .

(d) A chimera may be produced by using a mixture of human genetic material and genetic material from two or more animal species .

(e) Again, an embryo derived from. more than one man and one woman may be attempted by suitable mixing of the genetic material from more than two parents .

These processes are designed for experimentation so that the human beings thus treated are less than the guinea pigs commonly used , for they are destroyed with the experimentation .

The human embryo , from the moment of conception is capable of being a human being given suitable conditions . There is not one of us who has not been a similarly constituted human being at the beginning of our existence. There is no place in nature for the purposeful destruction of a human embryo , any more than there is a place in nature for the purposeful destruction of a human being for the sake of experimentation . Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer for the sake of Cloning should be outlawed by law, just as murder is outlawed by law, for in principle there is no difference between the innocent embryo and the innocent human being, with the possible difference that the embryo is less capable of being defended than the adult.

There is no good argument to support embryo experimentation and human cloning but much solid sanity to call for outlawing it. It was not a mistake when the Judeo Christian culture received the command ` Thou shalt not kill .`

Yours faithfully

Dr. John F. Heesh (BDS ret.)