

## **UK Scientists Create Human-Animal Hybrid**

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(April 3, 2008) In what officials of the Catholic Church are calling “a monstrous attack on human rights, human dignity and human life,” British scientists have created part-human, part-animal embryos from cow eggs and DNA extracted from human skin cells which they say could lead to promising medical cures.

The British researcher who led the work, Lyle Armstrong, received permission in January from the Human Fertilization and Embryology Authority (HFEA) to create the embryos, known as “cytoplasmic hybrids.” They were produced by inserting human DNA from a skin cell into a hollowed-out cow egg. An electric shock then induced the hybrid embryo to grow.

The embryo, which is considered 99.9 percent human and 0.1 percent other animal, grew for three days, until it had 32 cells. Scientists are hoping to grow similar embryos for six days, and then extract stem cells. They insist that the embryos will never be implanted in a woman and that the only reason they used cow eggs is because of the scarcity of human eggs.

Cardinal Keith O’Brien, the leader of Scotland’s Catholic Church, used his Easter Sunday sermon to attack the British government bill that will allow research using mixed human-animal embryos.

“One might say that in our country we are about to have a public government endorsement of experiments of Frankenstein proportion - without many people really being aware of what is going on,” O’Brien said.

The bill he is referring to is called the Human Fertilization and Embryology Bill. If passed, the bill will relax current government regulations that specify what is legal and what is not regarding artificial human procreation and human embryo research.

England’s Prime Minister Gordon Brown supports the bill, saying it is important and vital for dealing with life threatening diseases. His Labour Party has a 67-seat majority in the House of Commons, so the bill is likely to pass.

However, the creation of part-human, part-animal hybrids is not the only problem with the bill. The National Catholic Bioethics Center points out that it would also remove the current provision that requires a child conceived through IVF (in vitro fertilization) to have a father.

“Under the new bill, a single woman could self-fertilize using ‘sperm’ manufactured from her own (bone marrow) stem cells,” the Center said in a March 17 news release.

“Biologically, this is different from cloning (asexual reproduction) in that self-fertilization is a type of sexual reproduction. Ethically, however, a similar grave objection (as to human cloning) exists in that the resulting human zygote was not conceived through the marital act, and because

it denies the child a father.

At its root, the “fundamental divide comes when one sees human procreation either as a utilitarian process of manufacturing the baby that I want here and now, or as the deepest of human mysteries through which God collaborates with a married heterosexual couple in the miracle of creating a new human life,” the Center writes.

“ . . . Respect for the dignity of human life requires that each person be treated as a subject and not as an object.”

While proponents of the bill claim the Church is using fear-mongering techniques to stand in the way of science, not a single cure has ever been realized from this kind of controversial research. Adult stem cells, on the other hand, are already providing dozens of medical treatments and cures. Many believe the reason why adult stem cell research is getting so little notice and funding is because the stem cell lines created from embryonic stem cells can be patented and turned into multi-billion dollar commodities.

The Catholic Church is not the only Christian organization speaking out against the research.

“I can understand the need for finding cures for debilitating diseases, but creating a predominantly human embryo to be destroyed on the altar of finding cures is unconscionable,” said Phil Magnan, President of Biblical Family Advocates to the *Christian Newswire*.

“There are already many cures derived from using adult stem cells, why do we need to lower ourselves to the lowest common denominator by harvesting cells from pre born children made in the image of God? We were all embryos at one time.”

He added: “It is apparent that morality has been thrown out the window in the interest of making a new discovery. It is our belief that when science no longer has a moral compass it forfeits its credibility to be of benefit to society and is in fact on the road to create scientific genocide.”

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