

Scottish Council on Human Bioethics

15 Morningside Road, Edinburgh EH10 4DP, SCOTLAND, UK

Date: 20 July 2007 – Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority

Consultation Paper on Hybrids and Chimeras

Consultation response on behalf of the Scottish Council on Human Bioethics:

The **Scottish Council on Human Bioethics** (SCHB) is an independent, non-partisan, non-religious registered Scottish charity comprising doctors, lawyers, psychologists, ethicists and other professionals from disciplines associated with medical ethics.

The SCHB subscribes to the principles set out in the **United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights** which was adopted and proclaimed by the UN General Assembly by resolution 217A (III) on 10 December 1948.

The SCHB is grateful to the HFEA for this opportunity to respond to the consultation entitled **Hybrids and Chimeras**. It welcomes the HFEA's intent to promote public consultation, understanding and discussion on the ethical and social implications of creating human/animal embryos in research.

In addressing the consultation, the SCHB has formulated the following responses, which can be made publicly available by the HFEA:

1. The following types of embryo research are already legally permitted and licensed in the UK. Which of them, in your view, are acceptable?

- Research using human embryos donated by IVF patients;
- Research using human embryos created specifically for research from donated eggs and sperm;
- Research using cloned human embryos created specifically for research through cell nuclear replacement (CNR);
- No research using human embryos is acceptable;
- Not sure/undecided.

SCHB Response:

The SCHB is of the opinion that the creation of human embryos for the express purpose of destructive experimentation is unacceptable. In this, it conforms to Article 18 of the **European Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine** which has been ratified by 21 European Countries with another 13 signing their intention to ratify. This article indicates that:

Article 18 – Research on embryos in vitro

- 1 *Where the law allows research on embryos in vitro, it shall ensure adequate protection of the embryo.*
- 2 *The creation of human embryos for research purposes is prohibited.*

2. Do you think that the HFEA should issue licences to allow research using cytoplasmic hybrid embryos?

SCHB Response:

The SCHB does not believe that the HFEA should issue licences to allow research using cytoplasmic hybrid embryos. This is because of the reasons given in the attached report and the fact that the SCHB is unsure whether or not the HFEA is even entitled to regulate embryos created by inter-species nuclear transfer.

3. Do you think that the law should in future permit the creation of true hybrid embryos for licensed research purposes?

SCHB Response:

The SCHB believes that the creation of true hybrid embryos in which human gametes (eggs and sperm) are mixed with those of nonhuman animals should not be licensed. This procedure has indeed been prohibited in many European countries since it was considered morally offensive. Additional reasons for prohibiting the creation of true hybrid embryos can be found in the attached report.

4. Do you think that the HFEA should in future issue licences to allow research using human chimera embryos?

SCHB Response:

No, the SCHB disagrees with the issuing of licences in the future to allow such research.

5. If you have answered yes to questions 2 to 4, what limits do you think should be placed upon human embryo research?

SCHB Response:

Not applicable.

Human embryonic research is only ethically acceptable if it intends to benefit the embryo being examined.