

Note

I am indebted to two anonymous Otago Bioethics Report referees, and to John McMillan, Tim Mulgan, Charlotte Paul, and participants in the February 1998 Bioethics Summer School in Dunedin for very helpful discussion of issues addressed in this paper.

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At the Centre

The most significant change over the last few months has been the developments resulting from having a new director. Donald's arrival was timely, as a number of new educational initiatives are starting this year. As mentioned in previous issues of the Report, the new Patient Doctor and Society module began in 1997. It is a two-year programme for second and third-year medical students incorporating contributions from Preventive and Social Medicine, Behavioural Science and Bioethics. 1998 sees the beginning of the third-year component of the new module and the continuation of the second-year components developed last year. Planning for the new clinical curriculum (Years four, five and six of the medical programme) is underway.

Donald Evans and his successor at Swansea, Dr Martyn Evans, have written a book entitled *A Decent Proposal*. A limited number of books offer the detail necessary to be a useful guide to research ethics. The detail and accessibility of *A Decent Proposal* means that it is an ideal resource for students studying research ethics, for research ethics committee members, as well as for researchers. It is published by John Wiley Publishers. It is not yet available in New Zealand book stores and will probably be quite expensive to purchase here. For readers interested in having a copy of this publication, the best way to obtain it would be through one of the Internet book stores. We are planning to publish a review of this book in the next issue of the Otago Bioethics Report.

Jenny Conder and Maggie Oakley have had official confirmation of their Master of Health Science degrees. Jenny's thesis was about moral decision-making and paediatric decision-making, while Maggie wrote her thesis on women's experience of ultrasound screening. Everybody at the Centre congratulates Jenny and Maggie on their success and wishes them the best for the future. Bachelor of Medical Sciences student Neil Price has finished his thesis and returned to the fourth year of his medical programme. Neil's thesis concerned quality and the doctor-patient relationship. We are looking forward to seeing Neil again in the ethics sessions of the clinical course.

Reader's Views

Dear Editor

I have just read Murray Davidson's account of the 'Gene Technology: Benefits and Risks' conference that was held in Wellington on 21 August and I would like to correct an impression that he gives of points that I 'made strongly' in my own paper. I have no quarrel with the first of them - that I saw exciting progress in the near future when researchers will be able to insert genes with precision into an exact location in the genome - but I would like to clarify his report that I expressed 'caution concerning the sort of legislation which banned animal experimentation', which I am reported as saying would 'destroy NZ science'.

This second comment was not in my paper, but arose during discussion (I think of someone else's paper). In that discussion, I drew attention to the legislation that was being planned with the main intention of prohibiting the cloning of human embryos in NZ. I had been reliably informed that the draft bill included a ban on all 'human-animal hybrids' - including hybrid cell lines. I pointed out that, if this really was going to be in the legislation, this would prevent NZ geneticists from making the hamster/human and mouse/human hybrid cell lines that are standard tools for human gene mapping. Even worse, it would prevent NZ scientists from making 'hybridomas' - the source of the monoclonal antibodies that are so important in just about every aspect of modern biochemical and molecular biological research.

Perhaps I exaggerated in saying that such a ban would 'destroy' NZ science, but it would certainly have a disastrous effect.

Yours sincerely,

George Petersen
Professor Biochemistry

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