

“serious” conditions. However, if there was a true recognition of the wrongness of experimenting upon human beings, all embryo research would be banned.

Since 1990 hundreds of thousands of human embryos have been used in research and no significant cures for disability have been found. Instead techniques such as PGD have been discovered which rather than preventing disability, result in affected embryos being discarded.

Many individuals living with disabilities do not accept that human lives should be sacrificed in their name. They recognise that their own lives are no more and no less valuable than those of the embryos destroyed in research.

Whatever we do to early embryos today, others will do to later embryos in the future. Ultimately, vulnerable humans at any stage of their lives could fall victim to destructive medical research. There is no essential difference between a 14-day embryo and a 15-day embryo.



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Embryo Experimentation

What you need
to know



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What is involved in embryo experimentation?

In Britain embryo experimentation involves research carried out on human embryos up to 14 days after conception. The law in Britain requires that all embryos used in research be destroyed.

Where do the embryos come from?

Left-over embryos created in the laboratory for fertility treatment, or embryos specially created from donor eggs and sperm are used in research, where both parents have given their permission.

Why is embryo experimentation carried out?

In 1990 the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act was passed to allow research on embryos for the following purposes:

- To promote advances in the treatment of infertility;
- To increase knowledge about the causes of congenital disability;

- To increase knowledge about the causes of miscarriage;
- To develop more effective techniques of contraception; and
- To develop methods for detecting the presence of gene or chromosome disabilities in embryos before implantation.

Since 2001 research has also been permitted for:

- increasing knowledge about the development of embryos;
- increasing knowledge about serious disease; and
- enabling any such knowledge to be applied in developing treatments for serious disease.

Has embryo experimentation achieved these goals?

The only major development that has resulted from embryo research into disability is pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD). PGD is used to screen embryos in the laboratory to see if they are free from genetic or sex-related disability before they are implanted in the womb for development and birth. Embryos which are not

chosen for implantation in the womb are discarded.

Embryo experimentation: Ethical or not?

The life of the human embryo is sacrificed through embryo experimentation in the name of scientific progress.

The humanity of embryos is recognised by scientists. It is by virtue of their humanity that embryos are considered so valuable. The embryo's humanity is disregarded in embryo experimentation as he/she is considered expendable and of lesser value than other human individuals.

The human embryo is discriminated against based on his/her size and stage of development. This discrimination results in the killing of the embryo. The embryo's human rights are not respected even though the embryo is unquestionably a member of the human family.

Each of us was once an embryo, including the doctors and scientists who experiment on embryos.

Supporters of embryo experimentation say that embryos are not used “frivolously” to find cures for, for example, the common cold but “only” for