

HUMAN FERTILISATION AND EMBRYOLOGY AUTHORITY

ADDITION TO BUSINESS PLAN: PGD/HLA TYPING

Introduction

1. The technique of PGD with HLA typing allows the selection of embryos for transfer which, as well as being free from a serious heritable condition from which they are known to be at risk, are also capable of providing histocompatible tissue for transplant to an existing, affected child. Since the HFEA's decision, in November 2001, to approve, in principle, the licensing of PGD with HLA typing there has been considerable public interest in the technique and the ethical issues it raises. The HFEA's powers to license this technique have also been the subject of judicial review proceedings; the judgement of the Court of Appeal¹ appears to give the HFEA wide discretion over the indications for the technique may be licensed.

Amendment to the Business Plan

2. At the HFEA Annual Conference the Minister for Public Health, Melanie Johnson, indicated that the Government would be initiating a review of the legislation on assisted conception and embryo research. In order to contribute constructively to preparations for this review – which is likely to involve consideration of the extent of discretionary powers given to the Authority under the legislation – the HFEA intends to conduct a review of issues raised by the selection of embryos to produce tissue donors, to be completed by the end of Autumn 2004. This research will need to involve, among other things, taking evidence and seeking opinions from those with special expertise or interest in the technique.

3. It is proposed that the research will be managed as a special project, reporting to the Ethics & Law Committee, by the Policy department. This will require additional staff and resources which will need to be identified. The Ethics & Law Committee has already given the matter preliminary consideration at its meetings in July and December 2003 and is prepared to advise the Authority further on this matter.

Conclusion

4. Members are asked:
- to agree to the inclusion of this project as an additional item in the HFEA Business Plan.

HFEA Executive (Policy)

February 05, 2004

¹ *R. (on the application of Quintavalle) v. HFEA* [2003] EWCA Civ 667. The claimant in this case has recently been granted permission to apply to the House of Lords to appeal this judgement.