

This response was submitted to the call for evidence by the Nuffield Council on Bioethics on *Emerging techniques to prevent inherited mitochondrial disorders: ethical issues* between January 2012 and February 2012. The views expressed are solely those of the respondent(s) and not those of the Council.

### **Comment on Reproductive Ethics (CORE)**

Emerging Techniques to prevent the transmission of inherited mitochondrial diseases

1. There should be considerable focus on the work of Dr Jacques Cohen which was first published in *The Lancet*, July 1997, on the transfer of donor oocyte cytoplasm into recipient eggs, and the baby girl born from that procedure. She will now be in her teens. Some (?) 16 further such children are said to have been born before his work was restricted by the FDA in 2002. There was evidence at the time of abnormalities being reported in some of the embryos created in this way. What follow-up studies, however, have been done on the born children?
2. Whilst the rights of offspring created through assisted reproductive technology must always take centre stage, CORE continues to express concern regarding the welfare of the women who are targeted for their eggs in any area of assisted reproduction. Oocytes cannot be harvested easily and the process exposes women to real physical risks, sometimes fatal. We recommend the viewing of the documentary 'Eggsplotation', which reports on women's experiences in the US in the procurement of their oocytes. In the analyses of any proposals for maternal spindle transfer, the welfare of so-called donors must not be ignored.
3. Pronuclear transfer involving a developing embryo, is a cloning procedure, and rather than creating a 3-parent embryo, there would actually be 4 genetic progenitors involved. We suggest that it would be more than advisable to scrutinise the literature on cloning in other mammalian species. In particular we refer you (see attached) to last year's decision to close down (by Government advice) the animal cloning department of one of the world's leading animal research centres in New Zealand. This was attributed to unacceptably high levels of abnormality being verified.
4. Modifying the Human Genome before a human person comes into existence is contrary to international law, both at United Nations and Council of Europe level. The same applies to human cloning. Cautionary principles and the wisdom of crowds are not always given the weight they deserve. The United Kingdom is unfortunately often too willing to ignore both international recommendations and the sagacity of the man in the street. In this instance we should bow to both.