

TOP BIOETHICS STORIES: APRIL - JUNE 2011 EDITION

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1. **“Underpaid Ovaries: An Antitrust Suit Is Filed against America’s Fertility Clinics”** *The Economist*, April 20, 2011.

Fertility assistance is a big and profitable business in America. Those needing help to conceive—infertile couples, older women, gay men using surrogate birth mothers—may be charged steep prices by the mostly privately owned clinics. In turn the clinics pay egg donors fees that often run into thousands of dollars. (<http://tinyurl.com/5wtmkl>)

An American woman is arguing that the price cap placed on egg donation is in violation of antitrust laws. Guidelines concerning the compensation of an egg donor strongly suggest that only in rare circumstances should a woman receive \$5,000 or more and circumstances where the woman may receive \$10,000 or more are inappropriate.

2. **“Surrogate Children Have No Right to German Passport, Court Rules”** *The Local*, April 28, 2011.

In a crucial decision on surrogate births, a court ruled this week that a child born to a surrogate mother in India has no right to a German passport despite having a German biological father. (<http://tinyurl.com/3ezxtc>)

A German court ruled that a child born to a surrogate mother in India does not have the right to German citizenship though the child was conceived using a German man’s sperm. Both Indian and German laws hold that the surrogate’s husband is the father of the child as opposed to the biological father.

3. **“Appeals Court Reverses Decision Striking Down Stem Cell Funding”** by Ian Millhiser, *Science Progress*, May 2, 2011.

Last August, Judge Royce Lamberth, a Reagan-appointed trial judge in DC, suspended all federal funding for embryonic stem cell (ESC) research — a decision which limits such research in a way that even President George W. Bush found untenable. Today, a divided DC Circuit panel reversed Lamberth’s decision. (<http://tinyurl.com/3m94w3l>)

An appeals court has found that the Dickey-Wicker amendment is not sufficient to halt research using embryonic stem cells. Judge Lamberth previously cited the amendment to suspend this type of research. Though the appeals court did not rule in favor of halting embryonic stem cell research, it left open the possibility for future attempts to challenge it again in the future.

4. **“Daniels Signs Controversial Planned Parenthood Bill into Law”** by CNN Political Unit, *CNN*, May 10, 2011.

Republican Indiana governor and potential 2012 presidential candidate Mitch Daniels signed a bill Tuesday that will cut off significant amounts of federal funds given to his state’s chapter of Planned Parenthood. (<http://tinyurl.com/64aeuwu>)

Indiana has become the first state to cut off taxpayer funding to local Planned Parenthood chapters. The controversial and embattled organization has recently come under scrutiny for aiding and abetting sexual exploitation of minors, but until now the organization has not had funding removed.

5. **“Swiss Block Limits to Assisted Suicide”** by Marianne English, *Discovery News*, May 19, 2011.

Over the last decade, the country has attracted ‘suicide tourism,’ consisting of people who seek assisted suicide in Switzerland because the practice is illegal in their countries. The Swiss referendum sought to limit assisted suicide services to only people who lived in Zurich for a minimum of one year in efforts to discourage foreigners from booking one-way trips to the city. (<http://tinyurl.com/5wsyhsn>)

Residents of Zurich, Switzerland have voted down a referendum that would have placed restrictions on non-residents’ eligibility to receive assisted suicide services. Had it passed, the referendum would have allowed only those living in the city for one year or more to seek help ending their lives.

6. **“Widow Granted Dead Man’s**

Sperm Plans IVF Trip” by Louise Hall, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, May 24, 2011.

A woman’s quest to have her dead husband’s baby will head interstate or overseas after the New South Wales Supreme Court found his sperm was her ‘property’ but state laws prohibit her from using it to conceive a child. (<http://tinyurl.com/3fpmk8y>)

An Australian woman has been granted permission to take possession of her deceased husband’s sperm. The sperm was removed from his body just hours after his death and frozen. She is now faced with finding an IVF clinic that will perform the procedure without the consent of her husband.

7. **“France Set to Uphold Curbs on Embryonic Stem Cells”** *Reuters*, May 26, 2011.

France looked set on Thursday to maintain its curbs on human embryonic stem cell research after the conservative government fought off a parliamentary bid to liberalize the country’s bioethics law. (<http://tinyurl.com/3gblutg>)

With one of the most conservative stances on embryonic stem cell research in Europe, France has voted to keep the regulations governing this research in place after an initial Senate vote to remove restrictions.

8. **“Nadya Suleman’s Doctor Loses California Medical License”** by Alan Duke, *CNN*, June 2, 2011.

The California fertility doctor who implanted a dozen embryos in Nadya Suleman, resulting in the birth of eight babies, will lose his medical license on July 1, state officials said. (<http://tinyurl.com/3kfv9t>)

The California doctor responsible for the “Octomom” debacle has had his medical license revoked for transferring an exorbitant number of embryos during Nadya Suleman’s 2008 IVF procedure. Dr. Michael Kamrav stated that his desire was to follow the patient’s wishes and he did not feel he could refuse to transfer fewer embryos than Suleman requested.