

BIOETHICS NEWS STORIES

June 2022–October 2022

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“Supreme Court Overturns *Roe v. Wade*; States Can Ban Abortion”

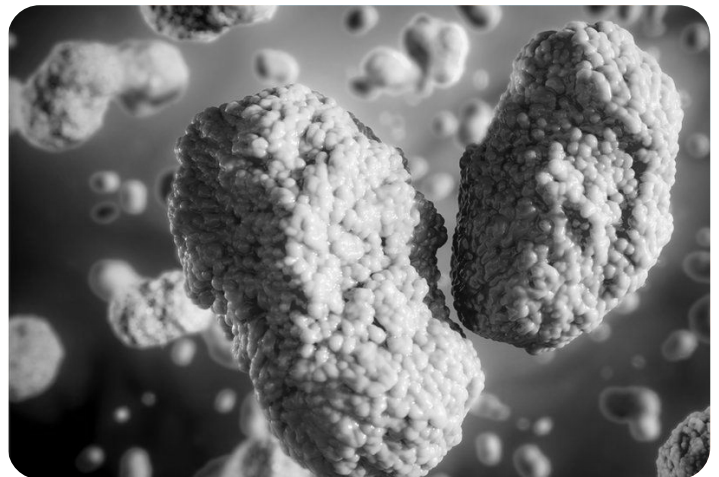
by Mark Sherman, *Associated Press*, June 24, 2022

The Supreme Court has ended the nation’s constitutional protections for abortion that had been in place nearly 50 years in a decision by its conservative majority to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. Friday’s outcome is expected to lead to abortion bans in roughly half the states. (<https://apnews.com/article/abortion-supreme-court-decision-854f60302f21c2c35129e58cf8d8a7b0>)

On May 2, a draft of a Supreme Court opinion that would overturn *Roe v. Wade* and *Casey v. Planned Parenthood* was leaked to the media. Then at the end of June, the U.S. Supreme Court published their final opinion of the Dobbs case. The opinion, written by Justice Alito, says that the authority to regulate abortion returns to the states and their elected officials. Additionally, the opinion says that *Roe*’s central rule is the viability line (i.e., abortion is legal until the point that a fetus can survive outside the womb), which no longer makes sense and is not used in other countries as a demarcation for legalization.¹ Before *Roe* and *Casey* were overturned, states already had varied abortion laws. Several states also had “trigger laws” in place for when *Roe* would be overturned. Several of those trigger laws have gone into effect and several states have had laws on their ballots.

Since June, news outlets have been reporting on the implications of the Dobbs case. The *Associated Press* reported that the European Union “overwhelmingly condemned” the end of constitutional protections for abortion in the U.S.² Several outlets reported that the demand for abortion pills has soared since Dobbs,³ and that some people are getting the pills from overseas websites that distribute abortion pills without a prescription, violating U.S. FDA rules. This is different from telehealth organizations that prescribe and send abortion pills to patients in states where it is legal.⁴

Several groups have worried that period tracking apps and location data apps could be used to determine if a woman has broken the law,⁵ and whether HIPAA laws imply that doctors do not have to turn over ultrasound and other medical information if asked to.⁶ However, much of the news is speculation as to how laws in different states will be applied. This includes whether IVF will be regulated since it involves the destruction of embryos and how this will affect prenatal genetic testing, since this can be tied to abortion.⁷ Additionally, some of the states have laws that need to be clarified so doctors and patients can know how best to handle difficult medical situations, including medical emergencies.⁸



“With Monkeypox Spreading Globally, Many Experts Believe the Virus Can’t Be Contained”

by Helen Branswell *STAT News*, July 19, 2022

It has been a mere nine weeks since the United Kingdom announced it had detected four cases of monkeypox, a virus endemic only in West and Central Africa. In that time, the number of cases has mushroomed to nearly 13,000 in over 60 countries throughout Europe, North and South America, the Middle East, new parts of Africa, South Asia, and Australia. (<https://www.statnews.com/2022/07/19/monkeypox-spread-many-experts-believe-the-virus-cant-be-contained/>)



“Monkeypox Appears to Recede, but Risks and Uncertainties Linger”

by Apoorva Mandavilli, *The New York Times*, September 26, 2022

Nearly four months after the first report of monkeypox in the United States, the virus is showing promising signs of retreat, easing fears that it may spill over into populations of older adults, pregnant women and young children. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/26/health/monkeypox-vaccine.html>)

In May 2022 a man in the UK contracted monkeypox, a viral disease that is typically seen in Central and Western Africa. The man had recently traveled to Nigeria. Monkeypox causes sores to form on the body and is only spread through contact with the sores. Over the course of several months, the disease spread to over 90 countries, and, as of this writing, cases are still present in the U.S., although transmission has greatly declined. This outbreak of monkeypox, recently renamed “mpox” by the WHO,⁹ spread predominantly through sexual contact and largely among men who have sex with men. In August, the U.S. declared the disease a public health emergency,¹⁰ but the Department of Health and Human Services does not plan to renew that designation in January.



“Pig Organ Transplants Inch Closer with Testing in the Dead”

by Lauran Neergaard, *Associated Press*, July 12, 2022

New York researchers transplanted pig hearts into two brain-dead people over the last month, the latest in a string of developments in the long quest to one day save human lives with animal organs. (<https://apnews.com/article/pig-heart-transplant-nyu-c332493b-4d6232edcf9ca389df976de0>)

“US Counts Millionth Organ Transplant While Pushing for More”

by Lauran Neergaard, *Associated Press*, September 9, 2022

The U.S. counted its millionth organ transplant on Friday [September 9], a milestone that comes at a critical time for Americans still desperately waiting for that chance at survival. (<https://apnews.com/article/science-health-organ-transplants-government-and-politics-308bfae0c70c3377d595b9a0a3a5a381>)

Even though the U.S. celebrated its millionth organ transplant, there are still more than 105,000 people on the national organ donation list. The *Associated Press* reports that 17 people die every day

waiting for an organ. One solution to the shortage of organs is to use pigs whose organs have been genetically modified by removing cell-surface molecules that signal to the human immune system to attack the foreign organ. In January, in a highly experimental trial, doctors transplanted a modified pig’s heart into a man with terminal heart failure. The man died two months after the transplant, but not of heart failure. Trials with deceased human subjects were conducted in July to better understand how the body responds to genetically modified xenotransplantation. In both cases, researchers considered the results moderately successful, but more studies need to be done.

Along the same lines of intermingling humans and animals, in October scientists implanted human brain organoids into the brains of rats. The organoids successfully grafted into the rat brains.¹¹

“Disturbing: Experts Troubled by Canada’s Euthanasia Laws”

by Maria Cheng, *Associated Press*, August 11, 2022

“Alan was basically put to death,” his brother Gary Nichols said. “Disability experts say the story is not unique in Canada, which arguably has the world’s most permissive euthanasia rules—allowing people with serious disabilities to choose to be killed in the absence of any other medical issue. (<https://apnews.com/article/covid-science-health-toronto-7c631558a457188d2bd2b5cf-d360a867>)

Canada is set to allow people struggling with mental health to qualify for euthanasia in March 2023. Lawmakers are considering whether to allow euthanasia for “mature” minors. Unlike in the U.S. where physicians can write a prescription for deadly drugs but not administer them, Canada is one of several countries in which a medical professional (not necessarily a doctor in Canada) injects the drugs into the person wanting to die. Additionally, Canada does not have the safeguards in place to prevent coercion and discrimination against people with disabilities. The *Associated Press* reported several examples of people with disabilities being encouraged to choose euthanasia, including one story of a man who qualified for euthanasia because he had hearing loss. Last year three UN human rights experts said that Canada’s laws seem to violate the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



“At Long Last, Can Malaria Be Eradicated?”

by Apoorva Mandavilli, *The New York Times*, October 4, 2022

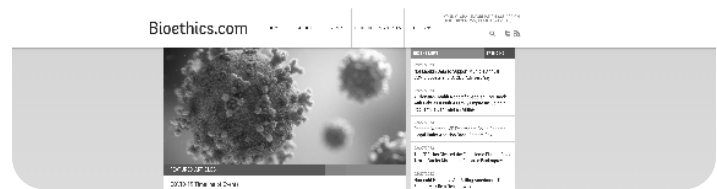
A more powerful malaria vaccine, developed by the Oxford team that created the AstraZeneca Covid vaccine, may be just a year or two away. Many experts believe it is this formulation, which has shown an efficacy of up to 80 percent in clinical trials, that may transform the fight against malaria. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/04/health/malaria-vaccines.html>)

“Malawi Starts Landmark Malaria Vaccination Drive,” *BBC*, November 30, 2022

Malawi has begun vaccinating children as part of a world-first, large-scale campaign against malaria. The RTS,S vaccine—more than three decades in the making—was developed by pharmaceutical company GSK. (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-63797178>)

While great strides have been made to decrease global malaria infections, there are still more than 220 million cases per year, with over half a million deaths. More than 90% of those cases are in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the deaths are predominantly in children under 5. Last year, the WHO approved a vaccine by GSK, brand name Mosquirix, and this November Malawi began vaccinating children. The vaccine requires several doses, and it is only 40% effective after the full course.

In September the University of Oxford Jenner Institute, the same institute that developed the COVID-19 AstraZeneca vaccine, announced the results of trials in Burkina Faso for their R21 vaccine.¹² The vaccine showed 70% efficacy after 3 doses were given to children before 17 months and close to 80% efficacy after a booster shot a year later. The vaccine is made with newer technology and is cheaper to manufacture. The University of Oxford has a deal with the Serum Institute of India to make 100 million doses per year with the hope that they can begin deploying the vaccine at the end of 2023. BioNTech is also working on an mRNA malaria vaccine and other groups are developing monoclonal antibody therapies for malaria.



Most Accessed bioethics.com Posts:

“All Is Beauty” October 25 (<https://bioethics.com/archives/66285>)

Editor's Note: A film produced by Simons fashion that lauded euthanasia. The film has since been taken off the retail outlet's website and is no longer accessible at bioethics.com.

“Deadly Fungi Are Infecting More Americans” October 24 (<https://bioethics.com/archives/66247>)

“Think You’ve Never Had Covid-19? Think Again” July 25 (<https://bioethics.com/archives/64446>)

“Why More and More Girls Are Hitting Puberty Early” October 28 (<https://bioethics.com/archives/66345>)

“Antidepressants Don’t Work the Way Many People Think” November 9 (<https://bioethics.com/archives/66552>)

Notes

1. The full opinion can be found at https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/21pdf/19-1392_6j37.pdf.
2. Raf Casert, “EU Parliament Condemns US Abortion Ruling, Seeks Safeguards,” *Associated Press*, July 7, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/abortion-us-supreme-court-health-european-parliament-660014a8f37c31e33a0f4540a34f5bd6>.
3. Oriana Gonzalez and Ashley Gold, “Abortion Pill Demand Soaring Following Roe’s Demise,” *Axios*, July 19, 2022, <https://www.axios.com/2022/07/18/abortion-pills-mifepristone-misoprostol-demand>.
4. Dominique Mosbergen and Vibhuti Agarwal, “Websites Selling Unapproved Abortion Pills Are Booming,” *The Wall Street Journal*, August 21, 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/websites-selling-unapproved-abortion-pills-are-booming-11661079601>.
5. Patience Haggin, “Phones Know Who Went to an Abortion Clinic. Whom Will They Tell?” *The Wall Street Journal*, August 7, 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/phones-know-who-went-to-an-abortion-clinic-whom-will-they-tell-11659873781>.
6. Oriana Gonzalez, “HIPAA Faces Test in New Abortion Reality,” *Axios*, August 10, 2022, <https://www.axios.com/2022/08/10/abortion-bans-patients-hipaa-violation>.
7. Andrew Joseph, “If Roe Is Overturned, the Ripples Could Affect IVF and Genetic Testing of Embryos, Experts Warn” *STAT News*, June 6, 2022, <https://www.statnews.com/2022/06/06/roe-v-wade-preimplantation-genetic-testing-ivf-clinics/>.
8. Adriel Bettelheim, “Emergency Treatment Law Becomes Focus of Abortion Fight,” *Axios*, July 12, 2022, <https://www.axios.com/2022/07/12/abortion-emergencies-hospitals-treatment>.
9. Helen Bramswell, “WHO to Phase Out the Name ‘Monkeypox’ for ‘mpox,’” *Stat News*, November 28, 2022, <https://www.statnews.com/2022/11/28/who-to-phase-out-the-name-monkeypox-for-mpox/>.
10. Zeke Miller, Mike Stobbe, and Michael Balsamo, “US Declares Public Health Emergency over Monkeypox Outbreak,” *Associated Press*, August 4, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/monkeypox-public-health-emergency-us-f336fc99abd-57f0866a38b578d5bb44c>.
11. Sara Reardon, “Human Brain Cells Implanted in Rats Prompt Excitement—And Concern,” *Nature*, October 12, 2022, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-03238-x>.
12. James Gallagher, “New Malaria Vaccine Is World-Changing, Say Scientists,” *BBC*, September 8, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-62797776>.