

Letters

Postcoital contraception

Sheffield GPs **Mark Houghton** and **Chris Bronsdon** continue the debate about the status of the embryo.

Mandi Fry (*Triple Helix* 1999; 9:6,7) attempted to help us think through in advance a right practice on 'emergency contraception'. However we feel it is disappointing that her reasons for choosing implantation as the start of life are not evidence-based or Bible-based.

Mandi uses the argument that since God allows the wastage of 30-60% of unimplanted embryos, then they are not yet alive to him and therefore we can discard them too. There are several problems with this argument:



1. Many unimplanted embryos have lethal chromosomal abnormalities, and therefore do not continue as a successful pregnancy. Only God knows

which these are, and to say that we can discard an unimplanted embryo, because God chooses to allow some to die, is to put ourselves in God's place.

2. Using this logic that 'high death rate equates with no value', then many children in developing countries where the perinatal mortality rate is about 50%, also have no value before God.

3. Many patients do not believe that life begins at implantation. In the main patients know quickly and intuitively that life begins at fertilisation. The common-sense view is that a new person (or persons) are created at fertilisation. In other words they know that the nuclear fusion of the egg, which is part of person A with the sperm which is part of person B creates a third person C. This person C has a distinct, unique genetic makeup and value of their own regardless of whether or not implanted yet. Many patients realise that destroying C is to take life.

4. Furthermore, and of course most importantly, it is congruent with the overall thrust of scripture, which for Christians should have authority over human authority

(such as the Faculty of Family Planning) if the two disagree. Many verses such as Jeremiah 1:5 'before I formed you in the womb I knew you', speak of a God who creates and knows people even before fertilisation has occurred. Greg Gardner has shown (*Triple Helix* 1999; 10:20) that Jesus was a person from the moment of fertilisation.

If scientists find that the moment of the beginning of life is unclear (Berry C. *Beginnings*. Great Britain: CMF, 1993) it is not unclear to God. Christians must not be naive. There is a massive industry that wants us to believe that life does not start until implantation or later, and has deliberately lied and attempted to redefine conception and pregnancy.

Population and famine

Surrey GP **Margaret White** takes issue with the claim that population increase maintains poverty.

Professor John Guillebaud (*Triple Helix* 1999; 10:4-5) is quite correct in part of his maxim of a vicious cycle of population; poverty certainly maintains population increase. Everyone needs one child alive and well to feed them when they are unable to work and one of the best contraceptives is an old age pension. He is wrong, however, in saying that population increase maintains poverty. It may do sometimes, but often the reverse is true – look at Hong Kong and Singapore!

At the many United Nations conferences on the family the delegates from the western world (lavishly funded by their governments) demand that 'reproductive health' – which includes abortion – be made a 'human right'. This would force every country in the world to provide abortion on demand. Delegates from the Third World, the Middle East and the Vatican have so far managed to out-vote them. It will however be brought up repeatedly so that in the end the poor countries won't be able to afford to send delegates to places as distant as Rio de Janeiro and Peking – and the eugenicists will have won.

End of life issues

Manchester pro-life commentator **Stuart Cunliffe** warns about phraseological slippery slopes.

I am grateful to Greg Gardner for his reminder of how language has been perverted in order to push particular causes. (*Triple Helix* 1999; 10:20)



But have we all noticed what is happening with euthanasia? We were told that withholding food and water from Tony Bland was nothing to do with euthanasia. We had always understood that euthanasia was a deliberate act or omission intended to take the life of the patient.

In 1997 the Government, which has always insisted it is opposed to euthanasia, defined euthanasia in its Green Paper *Who Decides?* as 'a deliberate intervention with the express aim of ending life' - no mention of omission - and suggested legalising withholding nutrition and hydration. Last year the BMA (having claimed that withholding food and fluids in its new guidance was not euthanasia but withdrawing treatment in the best interests of the patient) insisted, in the debating pack it issued before its forthcoming conference on physician-assisted suicide, that euthanasia, PAS and withholding treatment should be kept 'phraseologically distinct'.

Can we be sure that we are clear on the issues and that we are not taken in by linguistic gymnastics?

Editorial Note

Associate Editor **John Martin** apologises.

Michael Cotton has pointed out that contrary to what we said in the Millennium *Triple Helix* (*Triple Helix* 2000; 11:19) David Livingstone died at Chitambo in present day Zambia (not Tanzania). I've re-checked. He's right. Mea culpa!