

blood'. The statement was later corrected."

The only WHO press release issued after the 24–26 March 1997 meeting on human and animal spongiform encephalopathies was issued on 27 March 1997, and clearly states that "there has been no proven or even probable instance of CJD transmission from human to human by blood transfusion or blood products".

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## Greek is the word

Sir — I was shocked to read in Leslie Crombie's book review (*Nature* **387**, 251; 1997) that Greek is dead. I will try to come to terms with the loss of my mother tongue. Nevertheless, I should like to know whether the death was due to apoptosis or to necrosis. Now that I think of it, there is really no answer. These words are now dead.

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## Don't leave dignity out of the cloning debate

Sir — John Harris clearly doubts that the idea of human dignity is relevant to the ethics of human cloning (*Nature* **387**, 754; 1997). He questions how the intentional creation of a cloned embryo might contravene the notion of human dignity, in a society that accepts both abortion and research on early human embryos. But, although he rightly illustrates the potential hypocrisy of accepting abortion and embryo research at the same time as opposing cloning on the grounds of human dignity, this is hardly a justification for conveniently leaving the question of human dignity out of the debate.

The complex moral issues raised by the prospect of human cloning go to the heart of our self-understanding, our ideas of what it is to be a human being. To deny this would itself be a moral view, and one that would need to be supported by convincing arguments. There really is a fundamental difference between a naturally occurring identical twin, and a child that would be the clone of the person it would look to as its father or mother, and the genetic progeny of the people it would consider to be its grandparents.

Most people would surely agree that an individual should be treated as an 'end' in its own right, and never as simply as a means. I disagree with Harris that this principle "is seldom helpful in a medical or bioscience context", or that "it would outlaw blood transfusions or abortions carried out to protect the life of the mother". People who give blood find the act of donating to be something that enriches their lives, rather than simply reducing them to being the means to someone else's health. And those who value others as ends in their own right are not therefore bound to oppose abortion when essential to preserve a mother's life, since to do so would be treating the mother as a 'means', as much as valuing the child as an end.

Surely it is reasonable to argue that society must debate seriously the implications of human cloning for the individuals who would be created, rather than simply treating the issue as just another potential form of infertility treatment. And in such a debate, the question of human dignity will hardly be inappropriate.

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