



THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC BIOETHICS CENTER

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National

- *FDA dealing in aborted fetal tissue:* The Food and Drug Administration ([FDA](#)) has been caught purchasing human tissue from elective abortions for use in medical research. On July 25th, the FDA signed a \$15,900 contract with California-based Advanced Bioscience Resources Inc. (ABR) to procure tissue that is injected into mice with compromised immune systems in order to create a “chimeric animal” with an immune system like that of a human being. This was the eighth contract between the FDA and ABR since 2012. ABR was one of the companies identified in the series of videos recorded by the Center for Medical Progress (CMP) that showed Planned Parenthood profiting from the sale of fetal tissue obtained through abortions. CMP released a statement calling the FDA’s actions “unconscionable” and that having a commercial relationship with organizations like ABR makes the FDA “directly complicit in these abortions.” In response, the FDA released a [statement](#) assuring that the agency is “committed to ensuring that its research is conducted responsibly, conforms with all legal requirements, and meets the highest ethical standards,” and adding that the type of research involved is a “very small fraction” of the agency’s overall work.
- *NIH to no longer review all gene therapies:* Under a new proposal, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) will [cease reviewing](#) all gene therapy applications. Instead, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will vet such applications as it does with other treatments and drugs. The reason for the proposed change, according to the NIH director, Dr. Francis Collins, and FDA chief Dr. Scott Gottlieb, is that the two organizations do not want to “duplicate” regulatory efforts. While many hail the proposed change, not all experts agree. Stanford bioethicist Mildred Cho argues that as gene therapies are biologically complex treatments and that in many cases, “we really don’t understand how they work,” now is not the right time to be making wholesale changes in the regulatory process. It is important to note that new proposal only governs gene therapies that treat diseases *after* a person is born. It does not address therapies that alter embryos, or that alter egg or sperm thus making permanent germ-line changes that would be passed down through generations.

State by State

- *NYC schools enlist drag queens in classrooms:* Public schools in [New York City](#) have begun “Drag Queen Story Hours” where children are taught gender ideology. The program is described as presenting the “imagination and play of gender fluidity” while offering young children “glamorous, positive, and unabashedly queer role models.” First grade teacher Katrina Green, a teacher from Chickpeas Preschool in Brooklyn, described the program as allowing preschool children “to deepen and complicate their ideas about gender at the exact age when they are often developing rigid ideas about this concept.” Alexis Hernandez at the Maurice Sendak Community School, also in Brooklyn, endorsed the program stating: “Drag Queen Story Hour gave my first-graders a fun and interactive platform to talk and think about social and emotional issues like acceptance, being yourself, and loving who you are. During our debrief, [students] were preaching the incredible lessons they had learned, like ‘It’s OK to be different,’ and ‘There’s no such thing as “boy” and “girl” things.’”

International

- *Argentine Senate rejects abortion:* After a 15-hour debate, [Argentina's](#) Senate voted (38–31) to reject a bill that would have legalized elective abortion through the first fourteen weeks of pregnancy. The lower house of the nation's Parliament had passed the bill (129–125) in June and President Mauricio Macri had said that he would sign it if it passed the Senate. Abortion is legal in Argentina in cases of rape and “risk” to a woman's life or health, yet advocates wanted to create a “right to abortion” in the nation where doctors would be forced to perform the procedure or face jail. Following the Senate vote, some demonstrators set up barricades and threw firebombs, police responded with tear gas.
- *Ireland's ERDs?* In light of their nation's vote to repeal the Eighth Amendment of the Irish constitution which granted legal protections to unborn children, the Irish Catholic Bishops Conference has issued [Code of Ethical Standards for Health Care](#). In addition to addressing abortion in Catholic hospitals, the *Guidelines* ban contraception, gender “reassignment” surgery, illicit reproductive technologies, and crisis pregnancy and fetal anomaly counselling that includes abortion. The document is, in part, the bishops' response to the repeal of the Eighth Amendment, as well as to Prime Minister Leo Varadkar's statements that while individual physicians can exercise conscience objections to abortion, entire organizations (i.e., Catholic hospitals) cannot.
- *Ecuador seeks to protect parents' rights:* The National Assembly of [Ecuador](#) has unanimously (70–0) voted to uphold parents' rights to educate their children “in accordance with their principles, beliefs, and educational choices” without interference from the State, particularly with regard to sex education. The vote came in response to the nation's move to incorporate gender ideology in public education, and in particular as a result of the Constitutional Court's decision to take away “the protective authority of parents” and give it to the state when considering the “rights” of minors “in education and sexual and reproductive health.” Viviana de González, president of the Family and Future Foundation, stated: “Although this political pronouncement by the legislative branch is not binding on the [recent] ruling of the Constitutional Court, it's a clear response to the citizens' public demonstration of a half million parents who took to the streets July 28 in more than 10 cities in the country.” Demonstrators marched that day under the themes #ConMisHijosNoTeMetas (Don't mess with my children), #EnfoquedeFamilia (Focus on the Family), and #AmisHijosLosEducoYo (I'm the one to educate my children).

Of Note

- Please pray for all victims of sexual abuse, as well as for members of the Church as a whole. We need it.

Sharing the News: If you have public policy news that you would like to share with the NCBC, or if you have colleagues who would like to receive the Bioethics Public Policy Report, please contact Joe Zalot at 215-871-2014 or jzalot@ncbcenter.org.

Sharing the Resources: The web page of The National Catholic Bioethics Center, available at <http://www.ncbcenter.org/>, is a significant resource for bioethics information. NCBC bioethicists are also on-call for consultation twenty-four hours a day, seven days per week, at 215-877-2660.

Previous editions of the Bioethics Public Policy Report are available on the NCBC website at <https://www.ncbcenter.org/advocacy/public-policy-reports/>.

