



PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

14 FEBRUARY 2004

SCIENTISTS CLONE 30 HUMAN EMBRYOS

February 12, 2004 BBC New reported: "South Korean scientists have cloned 30 human embryos to obtain cells they hope could one day be used to treat disease. Seoul National University's Woo Suk Hwang, and colleagues, took the genetic material from normal cells in women donors and combined it with their eggs. The resulting embryos were then grown up to produce so-called stem cells that can divide into any tissue in the body.

The aim is to use the cells to replace ones that have failed in patients with problems such as Alzheimer's disease. "Because these cells carry the nuclear genome of the individual, after differentiation they could be expected to be transplanted without immune rejection for treatment of degenerative disorders," said Professor Hwang. "Our approach opens the door for the use of these specially developed cells in transplantation medicine."

Details of the research are published online by the journal Science, on its Science Express website, and are to be discussed here on Thursday at the American Association for the Advancement of Science's annual meeting.

There have been claims in the past for the creation of human embryo clones to study so-called stem cells - many of them disputed. But no group has reported producing so many early-stage clones and seen their development progress to such an advanced stage.

The work has also been subjected to the rigorous scrutiny of independent scientists before publication in a major journal. The team says it sought approval for its work from an ethical review board and obtained informed consent from its women donors before proceeding with the work.

The team tells Science Express how it used 242 eggs in its experiments taken from 16 women. In each case, material was transferred from the nucleus of a non-reproductive (somatic) cell, containing the woman's genetic blueprint, into a nucleus-free egg from the same donor.

Following this transfer, factors within the host egg's exterior, or cytoplasm, are believed to have reprogrammed the new nuclear contents by activating versatile embryonic genes, while silencing the more limited adult somatic cell genes. In total, 30 embryos - exact genetic copies of their female donors - were then cultured to the so-called blastocyst stage at which stem cells could be extracted.

These special cells were seen to divide into all three of the main tissue types found in the human body, the researchers report. The cells were even transplanted into mice to show they could differentiate into still more specific cell types, offering further proof of their "pluripotency".

The stated intention is to study human embryonic stem cells to see how they could be used as a therapeutic tool to treat disorders, such as diabetes, osteoarthritis, and Parkinson's disease, among others, in which tissues in the body have begun to fail..."

EARTHQUAKE CRACKS KNESSET

February 11, 2004 JerusalemNewswire.com reported: "An earthquake measuring 5.0 on the Richter scale rocked Israel and surrounding states Wednesday morning, sending frightened people streaming into streets throughout the country, but causing only one indirect injury and little damage. Israel Radio reported the quake left a crack in the ceiling of the Knesset plenum, Israel's parliament, just minutes before lawmakers were scheduled to take their seats for the day's debates.

Channel 2 TV reported that Israeli geologists believe a major earthquake could strike Israel without notice, and based on research predict the arrival of "the big one" in the next 50 years.

And Channel 1, screening a map highlighting areas of the capital believed to be especially susceptible to damage in the event of a major quake, pointed out that the Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock - both straddling Israel's Temple Mount - were most at risk.

The earthquake struck shortly after 10 in the morning, shaking buildings in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa and the Gaza Strip.

According to Israel Radio, staff in the Israeli Knesset thought a large bomb had gone off, and left their meeting rooms to gather in the building's corridors. The station reported that an engineering crew discovered a crack in the ceiling of the Knesset plenum, "directly above the table at which cabinet ministers sit." The quake occurred half an hour before they were scheduled to take their seats..."

ARABS PROPOSE EU-STYLE UNION

February 11, 2004 EUobserver reported: "The European Union is not alone in reforming its institutions. The Arab League is also changing the way its members co-operate and is looking toward the European Union for answers.

Yemen's President, Ali Abd Allah Salih is calling for the Cairo-based body to be replaced with an Arab Union which he says would boost effectiveness on the world stage. At 22 members and with minimal integration the League has struggled to make its voice heard outside its own region.

According to Al-Jazeera, the President wants EU-inspired reforms in order to "develop common Arab action with a view to giving international and regional weight to Arab countries". But in spite of decades of pan-Arab rhetoric, few leaders in the region are likely to be willing to cede power to such a degree.

"If our (Arab) brothers have reservations or consider that proclaiming a union would be premature, we are prepared to present other serious proposals or study the proposals of every other party".

The debate would not be out of place in Brussels. A founder member of the League, with less diplomatic clout than its neighbours - most notably Saudi Arabia and Egypt - Yemen's drive for integration could at times be compared to that of Belgium's."

UK AND FRANCE TO TAKE NEW DEFENSE STEP

February 10, 2004 EUobserver reported: "The UK and France are to join forces to create highly-trained, rapid-deployment units for combat in jungle, desert and mountain operations, according to the Financial Times.

The plan, which is to be unveiled this week, is part of general aim of Paris and London to strengthen European defense. It sets out a detailed agenda and timetable describing how and where the new units will conduct missions, and at what level they will be trained. London and Paris want the units to work closely - but not exclusively - with the United Nations, says the FT.

The initiative is open to all EU states but the main criterion for other countries joining is ultimately military effective-ness". The UK and France are aiming to have the plan accepted by all member states by the end of June with troops available by 2007."

STRUCTURAL COLLAPSE ON TEMPLE MOUNT

January 24, 2004 WorldNetDaily reported: "An interior wall has collapsed at a hotly contested Jerusalem holy site, setting off fears of religious violence between Muslims and Jews.

The Islamic Waqf, which administers the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock shrines atop the Temple Mount, accused Israeli authorities of instigating the failure of the wall by preventing engineers from maintaining it. The collapsed wall is situated near the Islamic Museum.

Adnan al-Husseini of the Waqf said the failure was the result of "the Israeli intervention in our work and preventing us from maintaining it after we stated it was in urgent need for a rapid action to prevent its collapse," according to multiple news reports from Israel.

"It looks terrible," said Eliat Mazar, an Israeli archaeologist and Temple Mount expert and a leader of the committee for preventing the destruction of antiquities at the site. "This collapse might cause a terrific series of collapses." She charged the Waqf with directing "unsupervised" work in and around the Temple Mount resulting in the loss of archaeological treasures.

Last December, WorldNetDaily reported a huge bulge had developed in an outer southern wall on the 37-acre Temple Mount, the holiest site in Judaism. Israel waited for Jordanian engineers to repair it.

Despite the fact the Temple Mount is the only real estate in the world revered by Jews, Israel has turned over day-to-day administration of the area to the Waqf, an Islamic trust with close ties to Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority..."

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