



LIFEalerts

Doctors For Life International's Bi-Weekly Update on Current Ethical Issues

LIFEalerts 03 November 2011

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Abortion

Mexico - Baja State Bans Abortion

Mexico's Baja state is the latest Mexican local government to ostensibly ban abortion, claiming that life begins at conception. The country's Supreme Court last week ruled that a right-to-life amendment to the state's constitution be upheld that effectively bans elective abortions in the state. Mexican women's rights advocates are angered at the ruling, saying it is yet another step backwards for Mexican society and women's empowerment. Mexico is a predominantly Catholic country, which has forbidden abortion."

<http://bikyamasr.com/44198/mexican-state-bans-abortion/>

USA - Mother with cystic fibrosis refused to abort triplets

An American mother suffering from cystic fibrosis defied medical odds, and her doctor's advice, to give birth to healthy identical triplets. When Kandace was told by her doctors to abort the babies to save her own life, the heroic mother showed her fighting spirit. "I knew that it was going to be difficult and risky for me, but I wanted to take that risk. I had never thought it was possible that I could ever be a mum, so I wanted to have that chance." Three healthy girls were born, each weighing 2 pounds. Although premature, each breathed well on their own and passed all the hospital's health test. None of the girls appear to have inherited the cystic fibrosis gene.

http://www.lifesitenews.com/news/i-would-have-died-for-my-girls-uk-mom-with-cystic-fibrosis-refuses-to-abort?utm_source=LifeSiteNews.com+Daily+Newsletter&utm_campaign=2e962832aa-LifeSiteNews.com_Intl_Headlines09_23_2011&utm_medium=email

USA - Abortions decrease in Arizona

Arizona has seen a 30% reduction in abortions since the passage of the recent pro-life laws of the Abortion Consent Act. The law requires minors to provide a parental signature, requires full and accurate information be given 24 hours before the abortion, allows only doctors to perform surgical abortions, and protects medical professionals from being forced to perform an abortion against religious or moral beliefs. State law also requires that women seeking an abortion first have the choice to see a sonogram of their baby. Abortion facilities have also decreased now the state requires them to meet the same minimum standards of outpatient surgery clinics.

<http://www.onenewsnow.com/Culture/Default.aspx?id=1460244>

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Alternative Medicine

South Africa - President calls for standardisation of traditional medicine

The South African Bureau of Standards should engage in an effort to speed up the standardisation of traditional African medicines as studies have shown most South Africans use these remedies, said President Jacob Zuma. According to studies conducted by the South African Traditional Medicines Research Group, which is funded by the South African Medical Research Council, an estimated 70% of South Africans regularly use traditional medicines, most of which are derived from plant species. These can be obtained on prescription from traditional healers, purchased from herb sellers or gathered in the wild for self-medication. The World Health Organization estimated the global market for traditional medicines at \$83bn a year in 2008, with sales growth in recent years of between 5% and 18% a year. Mr. Zuma said the government was committed to bringing traditional medicine into the mainstream of healthcare appropriately, effectively and above all, safely".

<http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/Content.aspx?id=156621>

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Euthanasia

Australia - Audacity or decoy?

A prominent Australian euthanasia campaigner has been given permission to import drugs used in assisted suicides. But Dr Philip Nitschke has said he fears he is being "set up" by the federal Therapeutic Goods Administration, which approved the importation of the sleeping drug Nembutal. However the doctor has been forced to specify that the drugs are only to help his patient sleep. Or is Dr Nitschke's announcement clearly intended to bring pressure on the South Australian parliament, which is debating the issue this week?

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/australiaandthepacific/australia/8789240/Right-to-die-doctors-set-up-fears-over-euthanasia-drug.html>

UK - Writer uses slippery slope by killing himself with euthanasia kit

Author Jack Semmens, 73, meticulously planned his own death over months and a 'how-to' book for those wishing to commit suicide was found lying near his body. He sent an e-mail to several friends, with the subject line 'Tired of life'. He ended his note by saying: "So many people live far too long." He had previously battled cancer, but at the time of his death was not suffering from any serious medical condition, and was in good health. He walked everywhere, went to the gym, and cycled 16 miles.

<http://www.sundaysun.co.uk/news/north-east-news/2011/10/02/writer-killed-himself-with-euthanasia-kit-79310-29522103/>

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HIV/AIDS & STI's

USA - Hormonal Contraception Doubles HIV Risk, Study Suggests

Women using hormonal contraception such as a birth control pill or a shot like Depo-Provera are at double the risk of acquiring HIV, and HIV-infected women who use hormonal contraception have twice the risk of transmitting the virus to their HIV-uninfected male partners, according to a University of Washington-led study of nearly 3,800 couples, in seven African countries.

http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/10/111003195253.htm?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+sciencedaily%2Fhealth_medicine%2Fhiv_and_aids+%28ScienceDaily%3A+Health+%26+Medicine+News+--+HIV+and+AIDS%29

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Homosexuality

No news today

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IVF & Surrogacy

No news today

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Medical Ethics

USA - Boycott China, says bioethicists

Despite assurances that the practice is winding down, China persists in using organs from executed prisoners. In an editorial in 'The Lancet', several prominent bioethicists have called upon doctors and scientists to boycott everything related to organ transplants. One of the authors, Arthur Caplan, of the University of Pennsylvania, says that controversial practice will not stop unless international pressure is applied. "Using organs from prisoners who are executed on demand to get parts for rich visitors may bring currency to China but it also ought to bring shame. The Chinese people who need transplants deserve a better system as do the hapless prisoners who are being victimized. The rest of the world should say so loudly and clearly."

http://www.bioedge.org/index.php/bioethics/bioethics_article/9774

Germany - Ethicists can't agree on humanized animals

The German Ethics Council has recommended that researchers be allowed to insert human genes into mice in a major report on human-animal mixtures. However, on the highly controversial creation of chimeras, or growing embryos by inserting the nucleus of a human cell into an animal egg, the Council failed to reach a consensus. No German laws appear to cover the procedure, which some researchers hope to use to produce embryonic stem cell lines. Thirteen members of the council recommended scientists should be allowed to do it; 11 were opposed.

http://www.bioedge.org/index.php/bioethics/bioethics_article/9772

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Pedophilia

No news today

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Pornography

USA - The 'Playboy Club' Canceled By NBC

As a result of dismal ratings and viewer outrage, a series that glorified the sexual exploitation of women and the Playboy philosophy that women are to be used, abused and then discarded was cancelled by NBC. "It is great

news that the 'Playboy Club' is cancelled after just three episodes. Clearly viewers are not interested in supporting the brand that normalized pornography and caused immeasurable harm to women, children and to men who became addicted to porn," said Dawn Hawkins, executive director of Morality in Media. According to Hawkins, key NBC advertisers left the show after receiving over 20,000 emails through their site.
<http://www.sacbee.com/2011/10/04/3959689/the-playboy-club-canceled-morality.html>

UK - Boys who watch porn likely to indulge in casual sex, harass girls

A study carried out in a dozen countries, also found that male kids who watch X-rated films were less likely to form successful relationships when they grow older. The report was carried out at the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society. Michael Flood said "There is compelling evidence from around the world that pornography has negative effects on individuals and communities. Porn is a very poor sex educator because it shows sex in unrealistic ways and fails to address intimacy, love, connection or romance. Often it is quite callous and hostile in its depictions of women. Petra Boynton, a psychologist, said: "Often when children look at more extreme porn it is done for bravado so they can laugh and say how disgusting it is."

<http://www.mid-day.com/relationships/2011/oct/041011-boys-watching-porn-harass-women-indulge-casual-sex.htm>

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Prostitution & Trafficking

Mexico - Major newspapers ban sex ads to combat trafficking

Some of Mexico's leading newspapers say they have stopped publishing most advertisements for sexual services. 'El Universal' newspaper said it had banned ads that could be used by people-traffickers to exploit men, women and children. "We're totally canceling our participation in this market, in our internet presence and there will be no more ads "of that nature" they said.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-14997329>

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Stem Cells & Cloning

USA - Neuronal Stem Cells Tracked Using MRI Scan

Until now, scientists have only been able to study neuronal stem cells by looking at slices of the brain under a microscope. Carnegie Mellon University biologists have developed an MRI-based technique that allows researchers to non-invasively follow neural stem cells in vivo. The technology could be used to further the study of neural stem cells and inform the development of new treatments for brain injury caused by trauma, stroke, Parkinson's disease and other neurological disorders. The findings, authored by Associate Professor of Biological Sciences Eric Ahrens are published online in the journal 'Neuro-Image'.

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/09/110929122856.htm>

UK - Gene therapy and adult stem cells unite

Patients with a genetic disease could, one day, be treated with their own cells. A study in 'Nature' corrected a mutation in stem cells made from a patient with a liver disease. Researchers said this was a "critical step" towards devising treatments, but safety tests were still needed. The research group took a skin cell from a patient and converted it to a stem cell. A molecular scalpel was used to cut out the single mutation and insert the right letter correcting the genetic fault. The stem cells were then turned into liver cells. One of the lead researchers, Prof David Lomas, said: "They functioned beautifully with normal secretion and function". When the cells were placed into mice, they were still working correctly six weeks later.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-15272081>

Japan - Neural Stem Cell Transplant May Tackle Diabetes

Researchers in Japan have discovered how a patient's neural stem cells could be used as an alternative source of the beta cells needed for a regenerative treatment for diabetes. The research led by Dr Tomoko Kuwabara from the AIST Institute in Tsukuba, Japan focused on which cells can be adapted to a specialized role for use in cell replacement treatments. However, once they had been transplanted into diabetic rats the cells not only

started to express several key characteristics of pancreatic beta cells, but insulin production was increased and blood glucose levels were reduced, revealing that transplanting neural stem cells into the pancreas could be an effective treatment for diabetes.

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/10/111006193826.htm>

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Substance Abuse

Netherlands - Government to reclassify high-potency marijuana

The Dutch government says it plans to reclassify high-potency marijuana alongside hard drugs such as cocaine and Ecstasy. The move announced Friday by Economic Affairs Minister Maxime Verhagen means that most of the cannabis currently sold in the Netherlands' famed weed cafes will have to be replaced by milder variants. Verhagen said the high-potency cannabis is so much stronger than the strains sold a generation ago, it should be considered a different drug entirely. The step is the latest in the country's decade-long retreat from permissive policies of the past.

<http://www.news24.com/World/News/Dutch-make-move-against-marijuana-20111007>

USA - Dagga doubles accident risk for drivers

Over 10 million people age 12 or older are estimated to have driven under the influence of illicit drugs in the past year, according to a National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Researchers at Columbia University did a meta-analysis of nine epidemiologic studies and found that drivers who test positive for marijuana, are more than twice as likely as other drivers to be involved in motor vehicle crashes. The researchers also found evidence that crash risk increases with the concentration of dagga produced compounds in the urine and the frequency of dagga use.

http://www.health24.com/news/General_health/1-915.66737.asp

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