

**General Assembly Resolution 3
ANA\C Genetics**

Final Amended Version 3/21/04

ANA\C

Nursing Issues and Nursing's Role in Genetics and Its
Therapeutic and Reproductive Applications in Science
Submitted by Elissa Brown for the ANA\C Board

WHEREAS, nursing has a long history of providing counseling and supportive care to patients making informed decisions about their care; and,

WHEREAS, the nurse is an educator, facilitator, supporter and advocate in this decision making process; and,

WHEREAS, there have been rapidly emerging scientific breakthroughs in genetics science, and access to related services raise significant ethical and human rights issues; and,

WHEREAS, the American Nurses Association\California upholds the American Nurses Association's position that supports the development of federal or state laws and/or regulations that are formed by experts knowledgeable about ethical, moral, medical, and social aspects of cloning,

WHEREAS, the American Nurses Association\California recognizes the potential for increased use of genetics testing, necessitating clear guidelines for genetics programs and nursing's role,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the American Nurses Association\California will:

1. Acknowledge the emerging scientific, ethical, technological, and political issues surrounding therapeutic and reproductive applications of genetics science.
2. Commit to expanding the study of the ethical, moral, clinical, biopsychosocial, cultural and spiritual implications involved in the care of these patients involved in genetics programs.
3. Promote nursing's participation in local, state, and national debates related to the scientific, ethical, legal and social and health implications of advances in genetics science, including human cloning and stem cell research.
4. Affirm that nurses must be knowledgeable about these issues in order to properly educate, counsel and support patients and their significant others.
5. Advocate nursing involvement in policy and procedure development and in

decision-making related to genetics issues, at all levels, i.e., in healthcare systems, and at local, state, national and international levels.

The following is the report from the American Nurses Association that was part of their report. It will provide some background for nurses to consider.

NY-1

INFORMATION FROM THE 2003 ANA HOUSE OF DELEGATES

SUBJECT: Nursing Issues Related to Therapeutic and Reproductive Applications in Genetics Science (Action Report)

RELEVANT CORE ISSUE: Patient Safety/Advocacy

INTRODUCED BY: Robert V. Piemonte, EdD, RN, CAE, FAAN

President, New York State Nurses Association

Barbara A. Blakeney, MS, APRN, BC, ANP

President, American Nurses Association

REFERRED TO: Reference Hearing

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: It is clear that nurses will be caring for individuals and families who are involved in the many aspects of therapeutic and reproductive applications in genetics science. However, the nursing profession has not taken a formal position on the many issues that are rapidly emerging as technology and science in these areas are advancing. It is the professional nurse who will counsel patients regarding aspects of procedures, including the ethical and human rights components, that should be considered in making an informed decision. In order to properly educate and counsel our patients, nurses must be knowledgeable about these issues.

(Please see the resolution on the first page)

REPORT:

This report addresses the importance of the involvement of professional nurses in counseling patients and families about participation in therapeutic and reproductive applications in genetics science (gene therapy, cloning, stem cell research, etc.). It is important to professional nursing that ANA educate its members and prepare them to answer questions posed by persons seeking health information to make personal choices about participating in therapeutic and reproductive applications in genetics science.

BACKGROUND:

The emerging science of theoretical and applied genetics has the potential to impact the care of clients and the profession of nursing, particularly in the areas of gene therapy, stem cell research, human cloning, and genetic counseling. These areas are broadly referred to as potential therapeutic and reproductive applications within genetics science.

While nursing may eventually be involved in reproductive applications of genetics sciences, it is more likely that nurses will more immediately be involved in many

aspects in care and counseling of patients receiving therapeutic genetic services. These therapeutic applications impact the provision of health care services and the delivery of nursing care to patients, families and communities. The professional association will be called upon to address clinical, ethical, moral, psychosocial, cultural and spiritual issues related to genetics science and both reproductive and therapeutic applications of the science.

ANA's previous work has addressed cloning as it relates to genetics science. The possibility of using cloning techniques to create human embryos and human beings has increased dramatically over the past year. These possibilities raise profound ethical, social and health concerns. It is crucial that nurses understand the science of this technology and appreciate the implications of related developments in gene therapy and stem cell research. Nurses need knowledge of both the positive and negative aspects of stem cell research, including the differences between therapeutic and reproductive applications of the research.

Currently, there are a number of stem cell lines available for scientists to use in research. The foci of these studies are predominantly on therapeutic applications. There are no regulations on the sources or purposes of stem cell research conducted by privately funded scientists.

The current ANA position on cloning supports the following:

- The current federal moratorium on the creation of human beings by cloning via blastomere splitting and nuclear transplantation in humans for both federally and privately funded research;
- The cloning of DNA, cells, tissues, and non-human animals using somatic cell nuclear transfer and other cloning techniques for basic scientific research and pharmaceutical development;
- A moratorium on the creation of animal/human hybrids through the use of cloning techniques;
- A reconsideration of the current federal moratorium on human embryo research;
- A vigorous national and international debate about the possible distinction between reproductive and therapeutic cloning as set forward by the Nuffield Council of the United Kingdom;
- Mandatory presence of nurses on governmental and nongovernmental ethics and policy boards examining the scientific, ethical, legal and social implications of advances in cloning and related technologies;
- Well-constructed ethical analyses of the possible merits of cloning (e.g., to remedy human infertility). developed by scholarly and deliberative bodies in

nursing such as the American Academy of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau, etc.;

- Well-designed survey studies of nurses' views about the scientific merits and ethical aspects of cloning in humans as it could affect individuals and families. The viewpoint of nurses and nursing on this matter is currently not known;
- Well-constructed scholarly examinations of core professional values in nursing and the implications of these values for cloning in humans;
- Continuing education programs designed for nurses about the scientific and ethical intersections among cloning, gene therapy and stem cell advances. (ANA, 2000)

In January 2002 the National Academy of Science issued an expert panel report on the scientific and medical aspects of human reproductive cloning. Based on experience with reproductive cloning in animals, the report concluded that human reproductive cloning would be dangerous for the woman, fetus, and newborn, and is likely to fail. The study panel did not address the issue of whether human reproductive cloning, even if it were found to be medically safe, would, or would not be acceptable to individuals or society.

The panel also concluded "the scientific and medical considerations that justify a ban on human reproductive cloning at this time are not applicable to nuclear transplantation to produce stem cells. Because of the considerable potential for developing new medical therapies to treat life-threatening diseases and advancing biomedical knowledge, the panel supported the conclusion of a previous National Academies' report – Stem Cells and the Future of Regenerative Medicine – that recommends that biomedical research using nuclear transplantation to produce stem cells be permitted." (National Academy of Science, 2002)

The panel stressed that all concerned segments of society should examine and debate the broad societal, religious, and ethical issues associated with human reproductive cloning, as well as those associated with nuclear transplantation to produce stem cells. Although this report focuses on the scientific and clinical aspects of these areas, it should help to inform this broader consideration by society.

In 2002 ClonAID claimed to have successfully cloned a human being which resulted in public outcry. Since a laboratory in Worcester, Massachusetts has attempted to grow cloned human embryos, and there are press reports constantly of cloning of animals in private and public research centers throughout the United States and the world, it is imperative that nurses discuss and identify the many scientific, ethical, technological and political issues related to therapeutic and reproductive applications in genetics science.

DISCUSSION:

Nurses are among the first health care providers to whom patients will turn with questions about therapeutic and reproductive applications in genetics science and from whom they will seek guidance regarding the complexities of use of these applications. Decision-making and informed consent involve safeguarding patient autonomy and providing impartial information about the procedure. In order for the professional nurse to provide this impartial information and adequately answer patient questions and address concerns, the nurse must be knowledgeable about all aspects of these evolving technologies. Individual nurses need information upon which they can make personal decisions regarding this national research agenda and participation in clinical applications of genetic research. Ultimately, patients and society will benefit from care provided by informed nurses.

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Past House Action(s):

1999 Human Cloning by Means of Blastomere Splitting and Nuclear Transplantation
1990 Maintaining Ethics and Human Rights as an Integral Part of All

Association Activities

1984 Commitment and Action on Human Rights

1980 Quality of Life

1974 Nursing Education and Research Involving Human Subjects

1974 Nursing Practice and Violation of Human Rights in Research

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