



## **NO CHANGE ON ABORTION**

**Abortion law is unchanged. The Government used a procedural tactic to ensure that abortion was not discussed in the Commons.**

Pro-abortion MPs, who had hoped to put forward a raft of amendments to liberalise abortion law at the third reading of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill, were furious. They wanted to abolish the need for two doctors' signatures, allow nurses and midwives to perform abortions, allow abortions in health clinics and doctors' surgeries, and extend abortion law to Northern Ireland. Amendments to restrict abortion had also been tabled.

There were rumours of argument at highest Government level. Harriet Harman, Leader of the House, who put back the third reading of the bill until the autumn, was now said to have done so to win more time for the pro-abortion amendments. Prime Minister Gordon Brown is said to have overruled her by allowing only a few hours' debate for the bill's third reading.

The Government then arranged for the abortion amendments to be so far down the list that there would not be time to discuss them.

There was speculation that he had done so because he feared reaction from voters, because it was feared that any amendments to abortion law would be overturned in the House of Lords, or because opposition to legalised abortion in Northern Ireland was so strong, with some politicians saying they would refuse to implement it even if it was agreed, that it was feared an attempt to impose legalised abortion there might spark a constitutional crisis.

A suggestion that he had agreed to shelve the abortion issue in return for Northern Ireland MPs' votes on anti-terror legislation was denied by both sides.

Whatever the reason, there will be no change to abortion law at the present time. The Government insists that it has no plans to introduce a bill on abortion, but it is rumoured that backbench MPs Nadine Dorries and Frank Field may attempt to introduce a private member's bill next year so that abortion can be debated.

# HFE BILL GOES THROUGH

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill, without clauses on abortion, was passed by 355 votes to 129 at its third reading in the House of Commons. It is the most significant shake-up of embryology laws in almost 20 years. Sixteen Labour MPs defied party whips and voted against the Government.

The bill now goes back to the Lords for consideration of such amendments as have been made in the Commons, but it now seems clear that creating human/animal embryos, creating “saviour siblings” from embryos with compatible tissue so their tissue can be used for transplant to sick brothers and sisters and ignoring the need for a father in considering approval for IVF treatment will become legal.

There were complaints from bodies concerned with medical ethics that an amendment which would allow the use of tissue without consent had been agreed by an all-party committee of 17 MPs given the job of scrutinising the bill, without any debate in Parliament. They said the amendment rode roughshod over basic human rights.

The amendment, agreed after the main parliamentary debates, will allow tissue to be used from people who lack the mental capacity to consent, from children whose parents give permission, and from anyone who has previously donated tissue but can no longer be traced.

Professor John Haldane, director of the Centre for Philosophy and Public Affairs at the University of St Andrews, said the legislation

was a mess which would sweep away 25 years of progress in medical ethics. A spokesman said ministers were satisfied that a case had been made which justified limited exceptions from the European Convention on Human Rights.

■ **Some scientists have insisted** that creating cloned embryos to obtain stem cells, destroying the embryos in the process, is essential to stem cell research—but it is becoming increasingly evident that the way forward is by ethical means which do not involve the loss of life.

Stem cells can grow into any kind of tissue, and could potentially be used to replace defective or deficient tissue, so curing things like heart disease, diabetes or strokes without drugs or transplants.

Japanese scientist Shinya Yamanaka found he could use a retrovirus to cause skin cells to revert to stem cells, but there were problems with gene abnormalities.

Scientists at a Massachusetts cancer centre and Harvard Stem Cell Institute have now found a method for generating cells using a common cold virus that does not introduce new genes into the genetic code. And Professor Yamanaka has now found he can use plasmids, instead of retroviruses, which it is believed do not pose a threat of abnormalities.

Research continues. *“If this can be perfected it would represent one of the holy grails of medicine,”* said stem cell scientist Robert Lanza.

Colin McGuckin, professor of regenerative medicine at Newcastle University and the UK’s leading scientist working on stem cells obtained from umbilical cord blood, announced that he was leaving Newcastle with a research team of about 10 for France because he said Newcastle University and UK funding agencies were prioritising embryonic stem cell work above work with adult stem cells, when adult stem cells offered the more immediate clinical benefits.

■ **There is increasing evidence** that abstinence education has positive results – despite the insistence of organisations influencing the British Government that abstinence education doesn’t work.

In the United States, where abstinence education is more common, programmes teach not just simple abstinence but also how to withstand peer pressure and make wise lifestyle choices. A review by the Heritage Foundation showed 11 out of 15 programmes studied brought a significant reduction in sexual activity among students compared with students who had not been through the programmes.

In the state of Georgia, in 1995 the education authority ordered abstinence to be taught in public schools. The teenage pregnancy rate for 15 to 17-year-olds had dropped 46 per cent in 11 years, with a drop in pregnancy rates every year since that date.

A review of abstinence education by Koinonia House says the number of high school students in America having sex has declined 12 per cent since 1991, with better results than the general 12 per cent where there is active abstinence education. Widespread teaching of abstinence programmes in churches and youth groups may have contributed to the decline, even where abstinence is not promoted in schools. The most important place for influencing youngsters, it suggests, is still the home.

■ **Two sets of American scientists** are working on producing accurate, non-invasive tests for Down’s syndrome early in pregnancy. It is expected a test will be available in two years’ time. It involves testing a sample of the mother’s blood to find chromosomal abnormality in traces of the baby’s blood which have crossed over into the mother’s bloodstream. At present, tests for Down’s syndrome involve using a needle to take a sample from inside the womb, which can cause a miscarriage, sometimes of babies which are perfectly healthy.

The trouble is that all that can be offered a woman with a Down’s syndrome baby is abortion. The test is also expected to tell the sex of the baby at seven weeks – another possible reason for abortion. *“This is a pursuit for perfection,”* said Josephine Quintavalle, of Comment on Reproductive Ethics. *“We are getting more information than we know how to handle.”*

■ **A new test** that will be able to screen embryos for almost any known genetic disease should be available as early as next year. At present only two per cent of genetic conditions can be diagnosed in this way. Embryos are created by IVF and a single cell removed from each embryo for testing so that a healthy embryo can be identified and implanted.

The new test, developed at the Bridge Centre in London, will cost £1,500. Application is to be made to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority for permission to use it. As well as revealing the possibility of serious disorders, the test can show susceptibility to developing a large number of medical conditions later in life. It adds to fears about the possibility of creating “designer babies.”

■ **The Family Planning Association** has produced a 12-page sex education pamphlet for six-year-olds to encourage primary school teachers to start sex education lessons earlier. The pamphlet, in comic format and titled Let’s grow with Nisha and Joe, invites children to label body parts. Parents’ organisations condemned it as too much too soon.

Image has a new pregnancy helpline website. Have a look at [www.pregnancyhelpline.co.uk](http://www.pregnancyhelpline.co.uk)

Image also has some redesigned pregnancy helpline literature. If you can use an A4 or A5 poster or free pregnancy helpline leaflets or business cards, please contact the *image* office.

# SEX EDUCATION FROM FIVE : IT'S OFFICIAL

What everyone has long suspected is now a fact. The Government is to make sex education compulsory in all English schools for children from five to 16 years old.

The Government launched a review of sex and relationships education, in which the sex education lobby was well represented, in February. Since then the sex education lobby has continually called, one organisation after another, for compulsory sex education for all children from the beginning of primary school.

4 Jim Knight, the minister overseeing the Government's review, gave assurances that there would be a "full public consultation on any substantive recommendations made by the steering group. . . before any decisions about implementations of the group's recommendations are taken."

Those promises appear to have been broken. He announced that he formally accepted the group's recommendations to make sex education statutory for all pupils.

Children will learn about body parts from the age of five, sexual intercourse from the age of seven, and contraception, sexually transmitted diseases, abortion and homosexuality from the age of 11.

As well as guidance on teaching about contraception, abortion and homosexuality, faith schools will be given guidance on teaching opposing religious beliefs.

A new review will now be led by a London head teacher to investigate how to implement the plan. It will be implemented from September, 2010.

Mike Judge, of the Christian Institute, said "Secondary schools already provide extensive sex education and it has utterly failed to improve teenage sexual health. Extending this to primary schools is a step too far.

"It will undermine parents as they face the difficult job of bringing up their children. The best people to teach their children about sex and relationships are their parents.

"In a culture that is obsessed with sex, schools should be one place where children are allowed to get on with life without facing pressure to deal with things they aren't ready for."

Almost three quarters of people in a BBC Radio Five live poll said parents should be responsible for teaching children about sex. Less than a quarter said teachers should be responsible. Norman Wells, of Family Education Trust, said it was vital school policies should reflect parents' wishes.

In Wales, sex and relationship education is already part of the curriculum. It is a legal requirement in Northern Ireland. There is no legal requirement in Scotland.

66 *Image says:*

This is too much too soon.

Jim Knight said soap story lines and music videos were increasing children's exposure to sexual imagery and sexual content, and sex education from five onwards was needed to combat the "earlier sexualisation" of youngsters.

This is a shameful excuse. If soaps and videos contain too much sex, shouldn't something be done about soaps and videos?

This is the state pushing parents aside and deciding it knows better than parents what is good for their children. This is giving children information they are too young to handle. This is legalised sexualisation of our children.

The Government says it is not yet decided whether or not parents will be able to withdraw children from sex education lessons. Parents need to keep a careful eye on that, as well as taking a careful interest in what their children are to be taught.

■ Teenage girls who are sexually active are twice as likely to suffer from depression as those who are not sexually active, according to a new study. Teenage sex, it found, leaves many girls with feelings of guilt and low self-esteem.

Academics at the American University of North Carolina studied 14,000 girls aged 14 to 17. They found 19 per cent of those who had sex exhibiting major symptoms of depression, compared with nine per cent of those who had not had sex. They found the mental health of boys in the same age group did not depend on whether they were sexually active.

A separate study by the American Psychological Association said the portrayal of young women as sex objects in parts of the media was harming young girls' mental and physical health. Other research into sex and depression has found that girls having sex before they were 15 and girls having sex without emotional closeness to their sexual partners were particularly at risk.

■ A two-month-old baby in an Indian hospital in Jaipur has six mothers. Her first, a Japanese woman, commissioned her with her husband. She divorced him before the baby was born. Her second was the Indian woman who donated the egg.

Her third was the Indian woman who acted as surrogate. Her fourth is her Japanese grandmother, who wants to take her back to Japan. Her fifth is a nurse, who cares for her. A sixth mother breast-feeds her.

When she was born, no one knew whose she was or which country she belonged to. She could not get a passport. After protracted

legal procedures, it is hoped she will have travel documents soon.

■ The controversial Mental Capacity Act is reportedly to be rewritten after complaints of complicated forms, high fees and long delays in putting into effect the powers of attorney it provides. The powers of attorney allow relatives to decide the treatment of disabled patients, including ordering doctors to end the lives of patients by withdrawing food and water. There have also been complaints about ill-trained call centre staff giving inaccurate, misleading and "insensitive" information.

Justice minister Bridget Prentice did not rule out changes to the part of the act allowing withdrawing of treatment. She blamed the office of the Public Guardian for the problems, but a former Public Guardian suggested the law itself is to blame.

■ The Voluntary Euthanasia Society, which changed its name to Dignity in Dying, sought to make "dignity in dying" a registered trademark. The Christian Medical Fellowship, Alert and the UK's Disabled People's Council challenged their monopoly of use of the phrase under the Trademarks Act. The pro-euthanasia organisation has now withdrawn its trademark applications, which means that "dignity in dying" may continue to be used in connection with the love and care people deserve to life's natural end.

"Well balanced." "An answer to prayer." "I am so glad I went on the course. I have learned and grown lots." These are some comments by people on a recent *image* pregnancy skills counselling course.

**The course will be repeated both in Manchester and London on Saturdays January 31, February 28, March 28, April 25 and May 16, 2009. Contact the *image* office for details and a booking form.**

**A small poster for the training course is enclosed. Could you display it on your notice board for us?**

# LET DEMENTED OPT TO DIE - WARNOCK

Baroness Warnock, arguably Britain's leading moral philosopher, said elderly people with declining mental faculties were wasting the lives of those who had to care for them and should be allowed to opt for euthanasia.

*"If you're demented, you're wasting people's lives, your family's lives, and you're wasting the resources of the National Health Service,"* she said. She said there was nothing wrong with people being helped to die for the sake of their loved ones or society, and she hoped people would soon be *"licensed to put others down"* if they were unable to look after themselves.

6 Neil Hunt, chief executive of the Alzheimer's Society, said *"To suggest that people with dementia should feel they have some sort of duty to kill themselves is nothing short of barbaric."* Phyllis Bowman, of Right to Life, said *"When has loving someone been a waste?"*

Lady Warnock, whose report in the 80s led to legalised human embryo experimentation, has supported ending the lives of both disabled and premature newborn babies. Her latest remarks raised fears that they would find support because of her influence on ethical issues.

■ **Debbie Purdy, a 45-year-old multiple sclerosis sufferer** from Bradford, went to the High Court in an attempt to force the Crown Prosecution Service to spell out under what circumstances someone accompanying someone who went abroad to commit assisted suicide would be prosecuted.

Miss Purdy said she would like to die in her own home, but as assisted suicide is illegal in Britain, she would travel abroad to end her life when her pain becomes unbearable.

Although no relative of the UK citizens who have gone abroad to die has been prosecuted so far, she said she did not want her husband to be prosecuted if he accompanied her. Judgment in the case is awaited.

It is understood the case is backed by Dignity in Dying, formerly the Voluntary Euthanasia Society.

■ **There are five assisted suicide organisations in Switzerland.** Exit, one of them, carried out 245 assisted suicides last year, some of them in old people's homes. But some homes do not allow assisted suicides on their premises, which, says Jerome Sobel, an Exit official, infringes patients' rights. Exit wants the right to operate in all old people's homes and is collecting signatures to force a vote on the issue.

■ **The Royal College of Nursing** is calling for premature babies to have the same rights to care that adults receive in intensive care units. It wants one nurse for one baby as standard, as recommended by the British Association of Perinatal Medicine. According to the organisation Bliss, only four per cent of neonatal units achieve recommended staffing levels.

■ **Women do have a decline in mental powers during pregnancy,** says Craig Kinsley, professor of neuroscience at the University of Richmond, Virginia – but this is because their brains are being remodelled to cope with the many new demands motherhood will bring. Hormonal fluctuations during birth and breast-feeding bring changes to the size and shape of areas of the brain, he said, that can lead to lifelong improvement in mental skills and can protect against degenerative diseases later in life.

■ **According to a study by Thomas Perls,** associate professor at Boston University Medical School, women who become pregnant after the age of 40 are four times more likely to live to 100. Some 25,400 babies are said to have been born to women 40 or over in the UK in 2006, and 71 to women 50 or over.

■ **The Family Planning Association** says children with learning difficulties need explicit sex education. It has produced a CD-Rom with explicit images of sexual intercourse and masturbation for use by special needs teachers and school nurses.

■ **At a 27-week scan** 38-year-old Jayne Jones discovered her son was growing in her abdomen, outside the womb. Both mother and baby were in danger. Doctors at a Plymouth hospital performed surgery never done in Britain before involving 36 NHS staff. Billy was born weighing 2lb 2oz and kept warm in a Tesco resealable sandwich bag. He is now doing fine. Hospital staff called him "Billy the Whiz."

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## CONDOM CULTURE A FORM OF CHILD ABUSE

By Denise Pfeiffer

Over the past few months radio listeners couldn't have failed to miss the repetitive adverts on sexual health – the Government's latest bash at using taxpayers' money to encourage "safe sex."

Not content with taking condom education into schools, it seems the Government has now targeted young radio listeners with adverts ending with the statement "Want respect? Use a condom." There is no mention

of the respect gained by waiting for marriage, or indeed waiting at all. Likewise, there is no mention of the genuine respect gained from making life choices that lead to increased self-esteem and a sense of self-worth.

There is no disclaimer at the end of the ads to warn that condoms don't protect from many sexually transmitted infections, least of all human papilloma virus – one of the most common STIs that can lead to cervical cancer.

Used consistently and correctly, condoms are only 85 to 95 per cent effective in preventing HIV transmission, and even less effective at providing protection from other infections, particularly herpes and HPV, spread by skin-to-skin contact. The adverts are simply contributing to an epidemic of teenage pregnancies, abortions and a continuing increase in sexually transmitted infections.

The sexualisation of our young is a new form of child abuse that is going unrecognised and unchallenged, for the sole reason that parents are either unaware of what is happening or feel that those in responsible positions must be making the right choices.

In the past year, the Department of Health has spent some £10.35 million on promoting "safe sex." Yet they have spent absolutely nothing on encouraging chastity.

As I write, another radio advert is speaking of chlamydia, a sexually transmitted infection that has no symptoms but can render those infected infertile. "It gets under your skin, making you infertile," the advert states. It goes on to advocate "a quick testing kit" and that if you are infected a short dose of antibiotics will get rid of the problem. Once again, the message is: Have sex now, and you can sort out any consequences later.

When did abstinence become unrealistic and unachievable? Young people surely deserve to hear that there is a better way.

*The above is an abridged version of an article published at [www.lifebite.co.uk](http://www.lifebite.co.uk).*

# YES, GOD HEARS AND ANSWERS

■ In his book **'The Beginner's Guide to Intercession'**, Dutch Sheets tells of an elementary school teacher who had a class of children from terrible home backgrounds. Before the school year began, she and her husband went to the classroom and prayed over every desk. They prayed God would place an angel behind each child to watch out for them throughout the coming year.

During the year, she asked her class to write about what they would like to be when they grew up. As they were writing, Andrew put up his hand and asked how to spell *"mighty."* She told him, and asked why he wanted to know. *"Because when I grow up I want to be a mighty man of God,"* he said.

Mark, sitting nearby, asked what a mighty man of God was. The teacher asked Andrew to tell him. *"A man who puts on the armour of God and is a soldier for God,"* he said.

Then Andrew beckoned for the teacher to come close and whispered to her. *"Do you believe in angels?"* he said. *"Yes I do,"* she said. *"Do you think people can see angels?"* he said. She said she thought some people probably could.

*"I can,"* he said. *"I can see an angel standing behind every kid in the room."*

**Sometimes, because we don't see an answer to prayer, we think nothing's happened. We need to have more faith. We need to believe that God hears and answers.**

**Thank God for answered prayer** in that abortion has not been further liberalised.

**Pray for** the continuing battle.

**Thank God that more people are becoming aware** of the need to curtail abortion.

**Pray against** continuing attempts to legalise assisted suicide.

**Challenge Team UK, who go into schools with presentations promoting saving sex until marriage, are having an excellent response from schools and youth clubs.**

**Pray for them** as they continue to tour the North of England and Scotland until the end of November.

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**image**



**CHRISTIANS  
CARING FOR LIFE**

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