

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Response to Eisenberg and Schenker [The Duties of Ethical Committees Applied to Human Reproduction (J Assist Reprod Genet 1996;13:689-697)]

**To the Editor:** In the October 1996 issue of this journal, Eisenberg and Schenker discuss the obligations a person assumes by virtue of being a physician in the field of human reproduction. Ironically, they neglect to treat the influence medical ethics should have in controlling research affected by economic motives: In the very same issue, Imthurn *et al.* discuss an economic motive (1).

They state, "... The need for a detailed endocrine monitoring in the natural cycle requires the availability of laboratory capacities 7 days a week. But our rather limited reproductive program made it very difficult and soon impossible to keep the necessary staff on duty 7 days a week. This ... explains why we had to find a [new] preparation scheme for frozen-thawed embryo replacement ..." (Ref 1, p. 711).

Eisenberg and Schenker also consider the patient-physician relationship without asking the question of who is physician and, more importantly in the field of human reproduction, the question of who is patient. To neglect the latter question is more deplorable than ironic, for in the field of human reproduction, medical ethics cannot be complete without professional dedication to its comprehensive treatment.

It really is ironic in a way, for in the very same issue, Baker *et al.* discuss their consideration of what has become a question of the person as patient, namely, that of his or her viability (2). They state, "In this case report, human embryos that had undergone the cryopreservation and thawing process twice retained their viability and resulted in a live birth. Thus, clinicians should not discard thawed embryos if they are not used, but consider refreezing them." (Ref. 2, p. 714).

It should be understood that these examples from the same issue are not given to single out their authors for criticism or to comment on the scientific quality of the work in terms of the proficiencies of these authors to complete useful research. Rather, it is simply to demonstrate that certain questions neglected by Eisenberg and Schenker are really as current as the very same article in which their discussion of medical ethics appears.

## REFERENCES

1. Imthurn B, Macas E, Rosselli M, Keller PJ: Effect of a programmed short-term stimulation protocol on the replacement of cryopreserved embryos. *J Assist Reprod Genet* 1996;13:709-712
2. Baker A, Check JH, Lurie D, Hourani C, Hoover LM: Pregnancy achieved with pronuclear-stage embryos that were cryopreserved and thawed twice: A case report. *J Assist Reprod Genet* 1996;13:713-715

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In response to the above letter, Joseph Schenker replied that his paper with Vered Eisenberg "concentrated only on the activities of ethical committees and had no intention to cover the broad aspects of infertility treatments, especially those with the new technologies" (Schenker JG: Response to Californiaa. *J Assist Reprod Genet* 1997;14:365).

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