



AAAS NEWS AND NOTES

edited by Coimbra Sirica

SCIENCE POLICY

AAAS Report Calls for Oversight of Inheritable Gene Research

Breakthroughs in genetic research designed to treat human diseases at a molecular level could some day lead to genetic changes that would be transmitted to future generations. A new AAAS report urges restraint, however, arguing that inheritable genetic changes "cannot presently be carried out safely and responsibly on human beings," and that "pressing moral concerns" have yet to be addressed.

The report, *Human Inheritable Genetic Modifications: Assessing Scientific, Ethical, Religious, and Policy Issues*, recommends the immediate creation of an independent body to oversee research into human inheritable genetic modification (IGM), as well as extensive public discourse about the scientific and moral issues raised by such research.

According to Mark S. Frankel, director of AAAS's Scientific Freedom, Responsibility and Law Program, technical obstacles in applying nonreproductive gene transfer methods to IGM raise concerns about the safety and efficacy of such genetic interventions. "The report recommends that human trials of inheritable genetic changes should

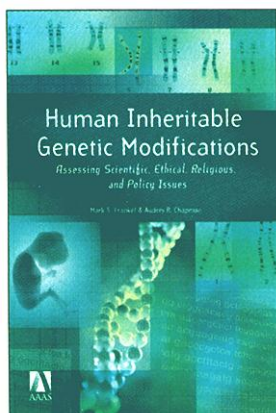
not be initiated until reliable techniques for gene correction or replacement are developed that meet agreed upon standards for safety and efficacy," said Frankel, who coauthored the report with Audrey R. Chapman, director of AAAS's Science and Human Rights Program and its Program of Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religion.

The AAAS report was prepared by a working group, composed of scientists, lawyers, ethicists, and representatives of several religious faiths, who considered the issues over a two-and-a-half year period. The study was funded by the Greenwall Foundation.

According to Chapman, serious ethical and religious issues were addressed by the group in the course of their

work, particularly concerning the "problematic" use of IGM to improve human form or function.

Frankel noted that the report recommends that if society decides to proceed with IGM research, "comprehensive oversight mechanisms should be put in place to review and approve all IGM protocols."



GOVERNANCE

Annual Elections

Ballots for the 2000 election of the AAAS president-elect, members of the Board of Directors and Committee on Nominations, and section officers were mailed to all active AAAS members (as of the 1 September issue of *Science*).

Please return your marked ballot by 13 November. Ballots postmarked after that date will not be counted. If you do not receive a ballot by mid-October, contact Linda McDaniel at Lmcdanie@aaas.org or by fax at 202-371-9526.

AAAS members can nominate candidates (including themselves) for president-elect and the Board of Directors for election in the fall of 2001 for terms beginning in February 2002. For a list of this year's candidates, see AAAS News & Notes in the 30 June issue of *Science*; for a list of current Board members, see the masthead page of any recent *Science* issue. Please send the nominee's curriculum vitae no later than 30 October to Gretchen Seiler, AAAS Executive Office, 1200 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005. Nominations will be considered by the AAAS Committee on Nominations at its December meeting.

The IGM report is available online at the AAAS Science and Policy Programs Web site at www.aaas.org/spp/dspp/sfsl/germline/main.htm.

REMINDER

AAAS Council Meeting: Deadline for Proposals, Resolutions

The next meeting of the AAAS Council will take place during the AAAS Annual Meeting and will begin at 9:00 a.m. on 18 February 2001, in the Imperial Ballroom of the San Francisco Hilton & Towers.

Individuals or organizations wishing to present proposals or resolutions for possible consideration by the Council should submit them in written form to the AAAS Executive Officer Richard Nicholson by 1 November 2000. This deadline will allow time for them to be considered by the Committee on Council Affairs at its 8 December meeting.

Items should be consistent with AAAS's objectives and be appropriate for consideration by the Council. Resolutions should be in the traditional format, beginning with "Whereas" statements and

ending with "Therefore be it resolved." Late proposals or resolutions delivered to the AAAS Executive Officer in advance of the 17 February Open Hearing of the Committee on Council Affairs will be considered provided that they deal with urgent matters and are accompanied by a written explanation of why they were not submitted by the November deadline. The Committee on Council Affairs will hold its open hearing at 2:30 p.m. on 17 February 2001 in the Big Sur Room of the Hotel Nikko in San Francisco, CA.

Summaries of the Council meeting agenda will be available during the annual meeting at both the AAAS Information Desk and in the AAAS Headquarters Office. A copy of the full agenda will also be available for inspection in the Headquarters Office.