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Nat Health

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

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FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

The Rt Hon Norman Fowler MP
 Secretary of State for Social Services
 Department of Health and Social Security
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29 April 1982

Sean Norman

IN VITRO FERTILIZATION: POSSIBLE INQUIRY INTO MEDICAL ETHICS

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter of 4 April to Willie Whitelaw on this subject.

I agree with your proposal to establish a Committee to look into this subject, and I have no comments on the draft terms of reference or on the proposed membership. I would certainly endorse the need for some scientists whose work is in these fields to be included in the membership.

Your third paragraph mentions a number of bodies who have established working parties in this field. I would like to mention, in addition, the Medical Research Council, who have their own Advisory Group on this subject (membership and terms of reference attached) and with whom I hope the Committee, if it is established, might make contact at an early stage in their work. It might also be possible for the Medical Research Council to contribute in some way to the servicing of the Committee, if you would like that.

I am not clear whether you envisage my involvement as one of the Committee's sponsors (if I accept your invitation) to be on the same level as that of the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales or on a slightly lower level.

Perhaps this could be spelt out further between our officials. But in general I would be content to be one of the Committee's sponsors.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, the other members of H Committee, the Lord Advocate and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Erwin Kaur

MRC'S ADVISORY GROUP TO REVIEW POLICY ON RESEARCH ON IN VITRO FERTILISATION
AND EMBRYO TRANSFER IN HUMANS : MEMBERSHIP

Chairman :	Professor G S Dawes
Members :	The Rt Rev the Bishop of Durham
	Professor C A Finn
	Professor M C Macnaughton
	Professor R F Mahler
	Professor P E Polani
	Professor A C Turnbull
	Dr Cicely Saunders
SHHD Observer	Dr F Davidson
DHSS Observer	Dr J Metters

TERMS OF REFERENCE

To consider ethical aspects of research on in vitro fertilisation and embryo transfer in humans and to determine on ethical grounds whether or not to advise the Medical Research Council to proceed with consideration of research proposals in either or both of these areas.

29 APR 1982

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