

Centre for Human Bioethics

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**And on the fourteenth day ... potential and identity in
embryological development**

Jeremy St John

Interview with Norman Ford

Georgina Hall

**Ethical review and the assessment of research proposals using
qualitative research methods**

Jeanne Daly, Mridula Bandyopadhyay, Elisha Riggs and Lara Williamson

Gaining human ethics approval: a strategy for refining research studies

Sonia Allen, Karen Francis, Margaret O'Connor and Ysanne Chapman

Plus: News in Brief ● At the Centre ● Notes ● Jottings

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ARTICLE

And on the fourteenth day ... potential and identity in embryological development

Jeremy St John 12

ABSTRACT

Australian legislation at both state and federal levels has been passed in the last two years enabling the creation and use of cloned embryos up until their fourteenth day of development. Yet for this fourteen-day threshold to carry moral weight it must be shown that an embryo may be plausibly attributed some kind of moral standing after this point that it

cannot be accorded before it. Moral standing may be conferred using Steven Buckle's account of potential to become (after one problem with his account is dealt with) but such standing has often been withheld from the embryo prior to the fourteenth day due to the possibility of monozygotic twinning and the violation of numerical continuity this represents. This article discusses the influential argument regarding monozygotic twinning articulated by Peter Singer and Helga Kuhse, and finds it insufficient to negate either the 'identity thesis' they describe or Buckle's account of potential to become.

INTERVIEW

Interview with Norman Ford

Georgina Hall

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ABSTRACT

After twelve years as the inaugural Director of the Caroline Chisholm Centre for Health Ethics, leading Melbourne bioethicist Dr Norman M Ford has resigned his position. Instead of contemplating retirement however, the tireless septuagenarian, who is also a philosopher, author, Honorary Research Fellow in the School of Philosophy and Bioethics at Monash University and Catholic Salesian priest, has his sights set on tackling even more controversial biomedical issues as an independent research scholar and author. Georgina Hall gets an insight into his life's work.

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ARTICLES

Ethical review and the assessment of research proposals using qualitative research methods

Jeanne Daly, Mridula Bandyopadhyay, Elisha Riggs and Lara Williamson 43

ABSTRACT

The role of Human Research Ethics Committees (HRECs) in health research is well established. Ethics committees have the good of research participants in mind but they must also assess scientific merit including the design and conduct of studies. In this article the authors' focus is on qualitative research method and the challenge that the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) poses for ethics committees when they assess proposals using the methods outlined in the National Statement.

We set out a process for judging the standard of qualitative research proposals and propose that qualitative health research can be assessed using a hierarchy designed for evaluating interview studies. We contrast well-designed studies with those that have design flaws in order to focus on the hallmarks of research merit in studies that use qualitative research methods. Finally, we show that our proposal is compatible with the National Statement. Ethics review provides an early opportunity to identify and redesign inadequate studies that will not contribute to our knowledge base. The challenge for members of ethics committees with little experience in qualitative studies is to be able to assess research excellence by assessing research merit in proposals, recognising the special design features of qualitative research methods.

Gaining human ethics approval: a strategy for refining research studies

Sonia Allen, Karen Francis, Margaret O'Connor and Ysanne Chapman

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ABSTRACT

We argue that developing a human ethics application is an effective method for refining the intent and design of research studies. Our study aimed to investigate the delivery of end-of-life and palliative care nursing to residents of an aged care unit in a Multi-purpose Service/ Centre in rural Victoria. We used the ethics application process as a strategy to focus the study, and to refine the data collection and analysis techniques. It is our contention that the process of completing the application and gaining ethics approval is laborious; however, the intellectualising that occurs provides researchers with an opportunity to reflect upon and refine their studies, thus ensuring the ultimate success and timely completion of research investigations.