

In the past few decades, as new medical technologies have been incorporated into the common medical practice around the world, new ethical challenges have been introduced in the realms of philosophy and ethics. These issues include: the consent of cell donors and subject of property rights in the field of tissue engineering and enhancement of human capabilities for longevity; cloning of animals and humans (potentially) in the future; genetic manipulation for diagnosis and treatment of diseases; use of stem cells and gene therapy for treatment of human diseases; genetic manipulation of plants to produce therapeutic drugs and food for people and many other related issues. The bioethical aspects of many of these new medical biotechnologies have been fervently debated for many years in private bioethics centers, universities and governments' sponsored studies in many developed countries. However, little attention has been paid to these issues in the developing countries, perhaps due to limited application of such technologies in a given country.

Fortunately, in the past few years, some national and international conferences on ethical aspects of using these new technologies have been held in Iran. Incidentally, later this year, in the month of November, two conferences are to be held in Iran which will focus on bioethics and new technologies. The international conference on this issue will be held by the National Research Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology of Iran and the national conference will be held by the Avicenna Research Institute. I must mention that the conference held by the Avicenna Research Institute will focus on genetics as a central theme and will consider the legal, ethical and psychological aspects as they relate to genetics and human health.

These two conferences will provide an excellent opportunity and should be very beneficial to those who are interested in bioethics, ethics, law, philosophy, sociology, psychology as they relate to human health. I encourage researchers, students, leaders of research institutions and government offices currently involved with issues related to medical biotechnology research, genetics and bioethics to participate in these conferences.

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