

[youtube:<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1yU99-QIDLc> auto]

Clonaid announced birth of "first human clone" on December 26th 2002. Eve was born by caesarean section after being created by Clonaid using a technique similar to that used to clone Dolly the sheep. Clonaid said they had four other mothers expecting to give birth to clones soon and announced a second birth to a Dutch lesbian woman early in January 2003 and a third to a Japanese couple who "cloned their dead son killed in an accident", plus two others in late January. All five babies were said to be well but with no independent verification whatsoever, doubts increased by the day.

After promising immediate genetic testing on Eve and others by independent scientists, Clonaid then claimed that lawsuits launched in the US and the Netherlands were making testing impossible because the courts were likely to try and identify the children and take them into care. This increased scepticism around the world that Clonaid was involved in a major fraud, with the aim of getting more couples to part with large sums of money. In early February they promised testing of the Japanese baby was under way. By early March there was still silence. Sadly another explanation could be that apparently healthy cloned babies have rapidly developed major health problems (as often happens in animals), or even died.

However one thing is clear: it could only be a matter of time before some team or other can prove that they have won the global human cloning race.

Clonaid claims they carried out 3,000 trials using cow eggs and human cells to form dividing embryos which were then destroyed - in a similar process to that conducted by Jose Cibelli at Advanced Cell Technology Massachusetts some years ago. Clonaid also say they fused over two hundred human eggs with adult cells in order to get just 10 which appeared normal, of which 5 implanted successfully. The worrying thing about such a claim is the mystery of the missing "monster" babies: the ones so malformed that they were destroyed in the womb, aborted or which died after premature births. These are the kinds of things we see in animal cloning and there is a disturbing silence from Clonaid.

There are also worries that any child created may age prematurely and die young as Dolly the sheep did.

While many may doubt Clonaid's capabilities, other human cloning organisations are reporting spectacular progress. For example Lu Guangxiu's team in Changsha China announced in January 2003 that they had also successfully grown 80 human clones, four of them to balls of hundreds of cells, the stage when IVF embryos are usually implanted.

Old report: A secret human cloning laboratory run by Clonaid is said to be based in the Nevada desert, with the first human cloned baby expected to be born in 2001. The plan is that the human cloning experiment will produce a replacement copy of a 10 month old girl who died last year.

Clonaid says five British couples, including two pairs of homosexual men have asked to be cloned. Peter and Ildako Blackburn, computer consultants from Huntingdon Cambridgeshire UK have expressed an interest in human cloning as an alternative infertility treatment but will not say if they are in touch with Clonaid. (Source Sunday Times 5 November 2000)

Clonaid is registered in the Bahamas and was founded by the Raelian movement who claim more than 50,000 members in 85 countries. Brigitte Boiselier is a 44 year old French biochemist who often speaks for Clonaid as scientific director. (Some spell her name incorrectly as Boisellier) She says that Clonaid will shift from animal cloning to human cloning experiments in January 2001, hoping for the first human cloning pregnancies by February.

More than 50 surrogate mothers have been selected to carry the human cloned fetuses throughout pregnancy, including Brigitte Boisellier's own 22 year old daughter, Marina Cocolios.

Raelians believe that humans are all cloned from alien scientists who visited earth. The movement was started by Claude Vorilhorn, following a spiritual experience in 1973. He changed his name to Rael and founded the cult.

America has no laws preventing human cloning research, unlike the UK, although no public funding is available.

