

The birth of the world's first cloned human was condemned by British scientists today as another example of the "sordid depths" to which maverick physicians will sink. The claim by Clonaid announcing Boxing Day's arrival of a baby girl called Eve born by caesarean section, will prompt "revulsion and disgust" throughout the world and will see 2003 go down in history of mankind as the Year of the Clone, Dr Patrick Dixon claimed.

Dr Dixon, a leading expert on the ethics of human cloning, described today's news as "totally inevitable", with separate US and Chinese teams also claiming that they have created large numbers of human cloned embryos for medical research. (see below). He warned that it would all mark a watershed when the world would suddenly realise that science is spinning out of control.

"We don't know yet (27/12/02) whether the claim about Eve is fact or fraud but one thing is clear. There's a global race by maverick scientists to produce clones, motivated by fame, money and warped and twisted beliefs," he said. "Today's announcement is totally inevitable and we can expect a number of other births of clones to be announced over the next few weeks."

He said that physicians across the world were propelled by "private passions and weird emotions" with the determination to deliver a cloned baby to any man or woman who wished to "duplicate themselves or recover the dead". The cloning industry, and today's announcement, was worth tens of millions of pounds, he said.

The Raelian Sect, who claimed responsibility for the first human clone, insist that an independent inspector will be employed to take DNA evidence from the baby and her 30-year-old mother. (Editor: they then went back on that promise 7 days later).

Dr Dixon added: "The baby born has been born into a living nightmare with a high risk of malformations, ill-health, early death and unimaginable severe emotional pressures. We should be very concerned for Eve 's welfare.

"Can you imagine what it will be like for a 12-year-old daughter to look at her mother and realise

she is seeing her own sister? "For Eve to look at her own grandparents around the Christmas table and to see her parents? Can you imagine what kind of freak show she will be regarded as for her entire lifetime?"

"What will it do to her sense of personal identity, knowing that she's only a copy of someone else who is much older?"

Dr Dixon said he had been contacted by many people motivated by "selfish means", struck by appalling grief and wanting to bring their loved one back to life.

"They are trying to recover the dead. One person told me how his 18-year-old handicapped son and died and he wanted to know what he would have been like had he not been starved of oxygen at birth.

"The only reasons people want to clone are for selfish reasons. They are totally obsessed with their own right to have a clone or to clone dead relatives, without any regard to the welfare of the child, and this is the whole thrust of it."

Dr Dixon claimed that although the baby had not been born in Britain, if the claims turned out to be genuine, it was probably British technology which had guided the process.

"The technology is well proven, not only in animals but also in humans. Last year Advanced Cell Technology (ACT) in the US announced they had successfully made the world's first cloned embryos using human eggs. Indeed, the reason why UK parliament gave a green light to proceed with legal creation of cloned embryos was because they had been told by British cloners that it was possible and important to do it for medical research.

(Note: Chinese scientists announced end January 2003 that they had cloned 80 human embryos of which 4 developed far enough to be implanted, before being destroyed.)

"I said then that clones would be made in Britain or made using British technology but would be born elsewhere."

He now believes that Britain and the rest of the world will see a significant number of new announcements about clones being born over the next year.

The human cloning laws are still so 'weak' that many couples, Dr Dixon fears, will legally conceive a clone in a country which allows insemination of a cloned embryo before returning to their country of origin for birth.

"This is a disaster waiting to happen because over 170 nations in the world have yet to outlaw the birth of human clones and many of the others are allowing the creation of human clones so long as they are not put into a woman's womb.

"This huge and powerful industry is pushing ahead to create large numbers of cloned embryos, despite the fact that the medical benefits may well be overtaken by a much more interesting process, which uses adult stem cells instead."

The Raelian Sect, which claims 55, 000 followers worldwide, believes that life on Earth was established by extra-terrestrials who arrived in flying saucers 25, 000 years ago, and that humans themselves were created by cloning. The sect, which formed the company Clonaid in 1997 to produce cloned humans, said the birth "went very well".

"We are entering a new age: 2003 will go down in the history of humankind as the Year of the Clone," Dr Dixon said.

"It will be known as that watershed year when humankind realised that science is running out of control, that mavericks were locked in a fiendish race propelled by private passions and weird emotions.

“As a result we will see a backlash, a public outcry against the abuse of [genetic](#) technology. This will set back medical research in many other areas by half a decade at least as funding dries up and investors get nervous.”

He concluded: “Human cloning is a big business for the future. This is about a big wadge of cash. We are talking about tens of millions of reward for exclusive media rights to the story of the first clones. We are also talking about significant numbers of people who we know are willing to pay over \$100,000 each to clone themselves. Let’s not be deceived that this is all about altruism.

“We in the UK have some soul-searching to do. We have just about the most liberal cloning laws in the whole world.

“We could well see cloned babies being born in Britain or arriving in Britain and they may well be to British couples.

America also needs to wake up fast, a country where cloning laws are weak or almost unenforceable right now.

“We need an anti-cloning global agreement that human cloners who make cloned babies will be outlawed, made pariahs of society, hounded from place to place and never allowed to work in science again.

“We must not allow people to inflict this terrible future on any more children. We are probably already too late to prevent the birth of what is going to be a small wave of human clones because we know from other reports that there are a number of women that may be about to deliver.”

Dr Dixon, who described the birth (if true) as “the height of moral irresponsability”, said he was surprised that the cloned baby was born on Boxing Day and not made to happen on Christmas Day amid a circus of media interest and financial bids from publications for the first pictures.

"It's just another example of the sordid depths to which the human cloning industry is sinking."

But he doubts whether this is the first cloned baby. "How many others died, how many did they have to abort because they had no arms, no ears or half a head? We know in animals for every healthy clone they abort many, many others."

Controversial Italian fertility doctor Severino Antinori also claims he has engineered a cloned baby boy who will be born in January.

So far, Scientists have succeeded in cloning sheep, mice, cows, pigs, goats and cats.

Last year, scientists in Massachusetts produced cloned human embryos with the intention of using them as a source of stem cells, but the cloned embryos never grew bigger than six cells.

Many scientists oppose cloning to produce humans, saying to is too risky because of abnormalities seen in cloned animals.