

# 9 REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY

## Introduction

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Issues relating to reproductive technology affect perhaps a minority of persons, and yet they loom very large on any bioethic committee's agenda. This is primarily because of the fact that here we are dealing with the very fundamentals of human relationships. Our actions will affect not only us, the current players in the field, but also future generations. That is the reason why procedures that are acceptable when applied to somatic manipulations may not be acceptable when applied to reproductive organs. Included here are procedures which involve growth of a fetus in vitro, the transplantation of fertilised ova, the manipulation of the germinative genome and so on.

Our Committee has been working on a document relating to reproductive technology for several years now. We have been blessed with a plethora of Ministers of Health. In fact we started the document under Dr Louis Galea, then under Dr Michael Farrugia, and thirdly and currently under Dr Louis Deguara. The reason for this is not tardiness on our part, but more importantly intrinsic differences of opinion in our society as reflected within the members of the committee itself.

I am hoping that the meeting today will clarify some issues which arise from this important area of human biology. We shall hear about the biology, philosophy, ethical as well as legal aspects. I am particularly interested in hearing also about the views of all members of the audience today, to try to assess the current views of the Maltese public, and not just the medical confraternity, about these topics.

The function of conferences of this kind is not only to pass information from the selected panel of experts to the general public, but also to glean as much feedback as possible, so that we, as a committee can feel that we are still in touch with the community. I do not believe that any ethics committee can function in too rarefied an atmosphere, detached from day to day developments in the views of society at large.

As a Bioethics Committee we would appreciate suggestions and ideas on where emphasis should be placed and which topics in your opinion deserve the most urgent attention. I feel sure this meeting will be of value to all of us.