

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Recent developments in human stem cell research have raised hopes of discovering new cures for debilitating and fatal illnesses and to alleviate suffering, holding much promise for the benefit of mankind. At the same time, the developments raise important issues about the ethics of such research.
- 2 In December 2000, the Bioethics Advisory Committee ('BAC') was appointed by Cabinet to examine the ethical, legal and social issues arising from biomedical research and development in Singapore, and to recommend policies to the Ministerial Committee for Life Sciences on those issues. The BAC's fundamental approach in addressing these issues is to balance two ethical commitments: to protect human life, and to advance human life by curing disease. The constitution of the BAC is attached as **Annex A**.
- 3 In particular, the BAC was charged with the task of addressing the ethical, legal and social issues arising from human stem cell research, as well as to consider the related issues of reproductive and therapeutic cloning.
- 4 Under the BAC, the Human Stem Cell Research ('HSR') Sub-Committee was formed in February 2001. The constitution of the HSR Sub-Committee is attached as **Annex B**. A research group was also formed to assist the HSR Sub-Committee in its work. The list of the members of the research group is attached as **Annex C**.
- 5 Since then, the BAC has thoroughly deliberated on the relevant scientific, ethical, legal and social issues surrounding the use of human stem cell in research, reproductive and therapeutic cloning, culminating in the preparation of this Report.

- 6 The Report begins with an examination of the science of human stem cell research¹, as well as reproductive and therapeutic cloning². The ethical, legal and social issues were identified³, an extensive consultation process was undertaken⁴ and a detailed study of the perspectives and positions adopted internationally was carried out⁵. The crux of the Report follows with the detailed deliberations of the BAC, and ends with its recommendations⁶.
- 7 In the course of its work, the BAC has received a wide spectrum of views, feedback and comments from the local community, especially those with medical, religious, scientific, ethical and legal interests. In addition, the BAC has received much invaluable input, advice and information from local experts and members of an international panel of experts. The BAC records its appreciation to those who have contributed to its work.
- 8 Finally, the BAC recognises that its recommendations will have a considerable impact, both locally and internationally. Through adopting a measured approach, the BAC seeks to support Singapore's continued drive to excel in biomedical research and development, while remaining a nation responsible to its people, and to mankind.

¹ See Chapter 2: The Science of Stem Cells

² See Chapter 3: The Science of Cloning

³ See Chapter 4: Ethical, Legal and Social Issues

⁴ See Chapter 5: The Consultation Process

⁵ See Chapter 6: International Perspectives

⁶ See Chapter 7: Deliberations, Conclusions and Recommendations