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# “A Rather Unexpected Aspect of IVF” — Over a Million Human Embryos Destroyed in Britain

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The development of *In Vitro* Fertilization technologies [IVF] has produced what one key observer has called “a rather unexpected aspect” of the technique — the destruction of well over a million human embryos in Great Britain alone.

As reported in *The Times* [London], over a million embryos have now been destroyed in British fertility clinics. These embryos are produced in order to lower the net cost of pregnancies and to ensure an adequate supply of embryos for potential transfer to the womb. Given the fact that many IVF transfers do not lead to a successful pregnancy, the prevailing policy calls for the development of multiple embryos — just in case.

This practice leads to the existence of potentially millions of “excess” or “surplus” human embryos. In some cases, the excess embryos are destroyed almost immediately after a successful transfer of other embryos. Otherwise, the embryos are frozen. But the frozen embryos are destroyed after ten years, if not before.

As *The Times* reports:

*The scale of the wastage has sparked calls from politicians and infertility groups to find ways to avoid so many being created for treatment. An alternative suggestion is that it should be made easier for couples to “adopt” viable embryos unwanted by their natural parents so they have a chance of life.*

More:

*Lord Alton, the independent peer who obtained the figures after tabling a parliamentary question, said embryos were being destroyed “at an incredible rate”.*

*“IVF has ensured that a number of people have been given a chance to have children. But it is surprising how many embryos are being destroyed in the process,” said the peer. “This is a rather unexpected aspect of IVF. If you could just create an embryo to implant, that would be fine.*

*“I think it would be much better if these embryos that are going to be destroyed were used for infertile couples. At least they would have a chance of life. The number of embryos used is expanding year after year.”*

While this report is likely to spark controversy in Great Britain, the situation in the United States and many other nations is virtually the same. Human embryos are being produced, almost factory-like, and then routinely destroyed or indefinitely frozen.

This phenomenon might be described as an unintended complication of the IVF technology. Nevertheless, all involved in this technology are responsible for this vast human tragedy, intended or not.

Far too many evangelicals seem to turn a blind eye to this reality. While we celebrate the birth of a child and the gift

of life, we cannot blind ourselves to the harsh and grotesque reality that this technology also means the destruction of human life.

Many evangelicals fail to see what many proponents of human embryonic stem cell research have noted — a glaring inconsistency in condemning the destruction of human embryos through stem cell research, while ignoring or dismissing the destruction of embryos in IVF clinics.

Lord Alton describes the stunning announcement that over a million embryos have been destroyed as “an unexpected aspect of IVF.” It should not have been unexpected, given the standard practice of the treatment and technology. Does anyone really care?

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