



Online Ethics Center
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

Look, I've Changed

Author(s)

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2000

Description

A scenario about research in which a strange side effect is noticed in mice which would not affect humans.

Body

NewPancreoGen Inc. is developing a material for a device to be used in the pancreas to encapsulate beta cells. This tissue engineered device will contain cells and eventually it is expected that the material will be degraded over time in the body. The material and cells were implanted and evaluated in a mouse model system over a period of time. The device performed well in the initial tests and further tests were performed in dogs and pigs. One day, one of the team members, Dr. G. Lucose noted that some of the offspring from the original mouse implant tests were developing a second tail. The larger animals were bred and no tails (mutation) developed.

- Is this product worth developing if only mice are affected, after all, humans don't grow tails?
- Is the product development worthwhile if extensive breeding is necessary? How many generations of offspring will be necessary to confirm the experiment? Is the research design appropriate?

- What side effects (or change in phenotype) are considered acceptable? What are the consequences of this acceptability?

Notes

Caroline Whitbeck introduced methods and modules for discussing numerous issues in responsible conduct of research at a Sigma Xi Forum in 2000. Partial funding for the development of this material came from an NIH grant.

You can find the entire sequence on the OEC at [Scenarios for Ethics Modules in the Responsible Conduct of Research](#). Some information in these historical modules may be out-of-date; for instance, there may be a new edition of the professional society's code that is referred to in an item. If you have suggestions for updates, please contact the OEC.

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Discipline(s)

Life and Environmental Sciences

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