

December 4, 1972

Dr. Larry Horowitz
c/o Senator Edward Kennedy
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Dr. Horowitz,

I was glad to have a chance to chat with you, even briefly, yesterday. I had started to tell you that I thought that to a large extent there was nothing especially different about the ethical constraints under which genetic therapies must operate as compared to the rest of medicine. But I never got to finish that paragraph namely that there is, of course, another side to it, namely the rights of the fetus. The issues of assuring the health and vigor of the fetus -- for example whether parents have the right or the obligation to intervene as trustees in the light of their perception of the eventual child's interest -- are by no means the same as those involved in abortion but to a considerable extent they are encompassed by the latter. If you get into the ethics of genetic medicine I do not see how you can avoid the abortion problem. Ideally this should be regarded as just one more chapter in the book but I am rather afraid that the heat of public controversy about this question may make it more difficult to look at the other problems that emerge more immediately from concerns about the rights of subjects.

Sincerely yours, .

Eushua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

JL/rr