

Activity: Should artificial twinning in humans be allowed?

At the moment, all forms of cloning that result in the birth of a live human are illegal. Some people think that artificial twinning is the most 'natural' form of cloning and should be allowed; others think it should be allowed only in special circumstances (such as couples undergoing IVF), whilst some think it should remain completely banned.

This activity is a structured debate that makes you think about some of the issues from other peoples' viewpoints. Before starting, make sure you know what artificial twinning is. You might also find it useful, but not necessary, to look over the rest of the ABPI resource on cloning.

You will need seven people: one person will be the chair and lead the discussion, and the other 6 will each be assigned a character who's point of view they will have to argue in the debate. If you have more than seven people you can have two or three people to argue one point of view; it is best to split a large group into two separate debates with a joint ending session to find out if both debates came to the same conclusion.

There are three characters arguing that artificial twinning should be allowed in humans, and three arguing that it should not. Like most complex issues, this is not black and white – and the characters opinions have been written to reflect this. Most characters arguing 'for' are actually arguing 'for, but only in some circumstances'. Similarly, some characters arguing 'against' can see the benefits of artificial twinning, but ultimately feel that these are outweighed by the possible problems.

In real life, people arguing a point of view want to make others think the same way as they do. Although all the facts on the character sheets are true, some of the other information may be slightly biased (but not untrue). The chair has been given extra information, so if you think a point is based too much on opinion and not enough on fact, stop the debate and ask the chair if it's correct.

What to do

- 1) As a group (lead by the chair) briefly discuss what you already know about artificial twinning. Hold a vote: how many people in the group think that artificial twinning should be allowed in humans?
- 2) Give one character sheet to each person. Each person to reads out the 'introduction' to their character in turn.
- 3) Debate, in character, whether artificial twinning should be allowed – your main point has been summed up as the 'issue'. Try to include the fact on your sheet in your argument and ask another character your question.
- 4) At the end of the debate, hold another vote and discuss (again lead by the chair) what you now think about artificial twinning. Is there a particular point of view that everyone agrees or disagrees with? Did peoples' opinions change through the debate, and why?
- 5) Your chair will let you know how your conclusions compared with those of real life government advisors. How did your conclusion compare to theirs?