

Britain posed to ban hybrid embryos

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Patients "desperate for therapy" would be denied potential treatment if Britain outlaws human-animal embryos, scientists said.

By proposing to prohibit the fusion of human DNA with animal eggs, scientists said ministers are barring access to a powerful medical research tool, The Times of London said Friday. The technique produces embryos that are 99.5 percent human and is aimed to address the shortage of human eggs for stem cell research.

The proposal was released last month. It won't become law for at least a year, but scientists said it already affected research. Two groups wanting to use the technique applied to the Human Fertilization and Embryology Authority for licenses, which are expected to be denied.

British Public Health Minister Caroline Flint said the decision followed public consultation in which most participants opposed the technique. Scientists said only 535 commented.

"There are hundreds of thousands of patients in Britain with degenerative neurological conditions," Chris Shaw, King's College London, who is researching motor neuron disease, told The Times. "We can use these cell lines to study them, and to see if drugs are going to be effective. To shut that down is a real affront to patients who are desperate for therapy."

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