

Princess Juliana's Newborn Clings to Life

Deformation Attributed to Effect of Novel Gene Therapy for Breast Cancer



Vigil outside of Cedars of Lebanon Hospital

(R. Gardner)

President Calls on Congress to Enact Legislation Regulating Uses of Recombinant DNA

(RNS) President Clinton urged Congress to revamp regulations governing the use of recombinant DNA. The call was issued in last night's address to the nation to streamline the regulatory process and enable safer therapies to reach the market more rapidly.

The President acknowledged the furor that has accompanied news of Princess Juliana's tragedy but appealed to Americans to find

strength in adversity and look past the pain of a child's life in the balance to the cause that Juliana espouses.

In an emotional moment, the President referred to her own painful divorce and how she has used it to focus her energies on the task at hand.

That task, said the President, was the economic strength of the nation and the health of its citizens.

The full text of the President's address may be found on page 2.

Tour de France Rocked by New Bionics Scandal

(RNS) The biking world was stunned at the cancellation of this year's Tour de France. Officials of the world's leading cycling race responded to yesterday's revelation that more than half the field tested positive for bionic limbs. This is the third race in as many years that has been plagued by fraud.

"This is a sad day for sports," said Tour de France organizer Marie-José Pérec. "We shall take all necessary steps to see that it does not happen again.

Bionic limbs are believed to be widely used amongst world-class cyclists, but this is the first time that so

many athletes have been caught. In a surprise move, the Tour switched to the controversial neural response test, sticking a sharp pin into the athlete's limb and analyzing his verbal response. The most common test is to detach all visible wires from limbs and ask the athlete to wiggle his fingers.

Inside

President's address to the nation on gene therapy tragedy

Citizen groups call for ban on gene therapy

(RNS) Breaking nearly a week-long silence, the royal family announced that the girl born to Princess Juliana last Thursday was affected by a serious defect in development. Doctors speaking on the advice of the family said that child was not yet able to breathe on her own.

The child, whose name has not yet been released, was reported to have been born with tiny limbs and a distinct scaly appearance, but doctors would not elaborate further.

Juliana remains in Cedars of Lebanon Hospital in Los Angeles. She has been in Los Angeles for the past twelve months undergoing an experimental treatment for breast cancer.

In a statement through a family spokesman, Juliana urged that her experience not impede progress in using gene transfer as a therapy for breast cancer. The princess has been a public champion of new therapies since revealing her own condition two years ago and volunteered for the gene therapy program administered by UCLA when it became available. She was not pregnant at the time.

In a parallel statement, Michael Rosenberg, head of the gene therapy program, revealed that the birth defect appears to be a direct consequence of the therapy Princess Juliana received. "We are shocked at effect the therapy has had on the child and can at present offer no explanation how the virus could have entered into Juliana's germ line."

An attenuated flu virus was used as the agent to deliver a gene to correct Juliana's genetic disorder responsible in part for her tumor. Rosenberg announced that tests on the newborn child's DNA showed the presence of the virus. Integration of the virus into a gene required for development could have led to the defect, he said.

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

Good evening.

Today the hearts of millions of Americans go out to Princess Juliana in her time of need. There is no greater pain a mother feels than when her child is struck down, and there is no greater sadness we feel than when we are witness to such a tragedy. Juliana came to our shores one year ago to seek the best therapy available for her medical condition, produced through the work of many at our academic institutions and research hospitals. She bravely participated in an experimental therapy involving recombinant DNA that promises to help millions of women fight off a deadly disease. She did so publicly, hoping by her celebrity to attract attention to the scientific advances that may someday put an end to cancer.

It appears that the therapy she undertook has brought on a heartbreaking result.

Some have blamed this calamity on recombinant DNA and seek to prevent further progress in life-saving therapies. Princess Juliana herself has stated that she blames the disease instead and begs that we continue our efforts to find a cure. We might do well to listen to this brave woman.

I feel a personal connection to Princess Juliana, a public person

immersed in a private tragedy. It wasn't long ago that I too was in the middle of a painful personal situation that could have sapped my strength and ability to do what is best for my country. I resolved at that time to redirect the energy from my private travail and focus it on my public duties. We as a nation may do the same. Our task is to maintain the economic strength of our country and the health of its citizens.

How can we accomplish this task and in such a way that all citizens benefit?

Our scientists in national laboratories and institutes of higher education throughout America have developed techniques that can greatly increase our ability to fight disease, improve agricultural productivity, and reverse the decline of our environment, and all at a cost less than what we spend today. The techniques involve changing DNA, the set of instructions within plants, animals, and microbes, in ways that make these organisms more useful. Just as understanding how to change molecules led to the introduction of new materials at low cost and a sizable increase in our standard of living, so can these new techniques to change DNA make even greater advances.

Unfortunately, there is currently a maze of entrenched governmental regulations that has stifled the practical application of these new techniques. If we are to solve our problems without undue sacrifice, we must sweep away this smothering legacy of the 20th century and put in place regulations that permit legitimate DNA manipulation while still protecting us with prudent safeguards. Accordingly, I have submitted to Congress legislation called the Recombinant DNA Act, aimed at revamping regulations regarding the manipulation of DNA, and I call on both houses to enact this legislation by May 15.

Now, I know that as soon as I conclude this address, special interest groups will descend on Washington. Some will wish to subvert the proposed regulations for their own reckless purposes, and others will wish to tie up the legislation out of fear of the bold new direction I have initiated. I am asking you to remain informed and make your wishes known to your elected representatives. If you will join me, we can offer our children a future based on prosperity for all. That's the future I want for the 21st century.

Good night.

DNA Challenges View of Life Says House Speaker

(RNS) Opposition leaders wasted no time in criticizing the President's proposal to cut away the red tape surrounding recombinant DNA.

"If this were a matter of saving lives, that's one thing," said House Speaker Frog Fournier. "But the President has exploited the tragedy to press for changes in the way we view life itself."

Fournier said he would accept the President's offer to work with Congress on legislation concerning new recombinant DNA technology but cautioned that there was a line he could not cross.

"The American people are concerned by the prospects of scientists playing God, and I'm going to make sure their concerns are addressed before we move on anything," Fournier said.

Fournier announced that a special subcommittee of the House Science Committee would meet at the beginning of next session to consider the issue. The committee will not be limited in scope to gene therapy but will consider all matters related to the use and regulation of recombinant DNA, including agricultural and industrial uses.

EEC Bans Import of US High Tech Milk Products

(RNS) The EEC announced yesterday that it would no longer permit imports of milk products derived from genetically engineered cows. This new policy was a response to a growing popular movement in Europe aimed at the increasing use of food as vehicles for vaccines. A large proportion of US milk now contains vaccines directed against various cold viruses.

A spokesman for the US Department of Agriculture said that the recombinant vaccines have a spotless safety record and promised punitive sanctions if the EEC did not rescind its ban.