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I'm writing as an ethicist of some 30 years, a philosophy PhD, currently Professor at the University of Montana. N.I.H. was right to impose a moratorium on chimera research last year. I'm very disappointed that N.I.H. is considering lifting the ban in the near future, and I hope you will reconsider.

The moratorium went into effect because of ethical reservations about this research, about the outcomes for the sacrificial, nonhuman animals in particular and there were concerns about crossing moral lines in general. People outside the insular and protected worlds of research science, N.I.H.'s community, still have serious reservations. In order to make responsible decisions the public needs to have access to the ethicists who assessed these serious ethical issues and to whatever their reasoning was, to their ethical deliberations. I see suggested policy changes but virtually no ethical grounds for them. Who reviewed policy and how does one access these people? Are there trained ethicists on the steering committee the N.I.H. proposes as an over-sight committee, an ethical layer of protection? If there are ethicists, how many, and are there at least as many ethicists as scientists? These are glaring omissions in the literature that I've been able to find so far.

What I've found in nearly every news item is that scientists are impatient for N.I.H. to lift the moratorium, that they're pressuring N.I.H., that they've convinced the agency that benefits to human beings outweigh the many moral risks, including and especially to animals. Understandably they're concerned about advancing promising professional careers in this area, and no doubt many are well-meaning. But science, technology, even good intentions are no substitute for substantial values debates, which are hard and messy and do not always condone whatever spectacular scientific breakthrough scientists are keen to move forward.

Slow this process way down, please. Genuinely and seriously engage the public to examine the moral issues surrounding this research. Judging from news stories and from various postings, the public has serious moral reservations about this. Just because we CAN create chimeras does not mean we SHOULD. Every student in every introductory ethics class recognizes the distinction between can and ought. N.I.H. needs to acknowledge the public push back. It's real. The general public feels a serious antipathy for government agencies like N.I.H. because the public simply doesn't feel heard and because these agencies appear driven by agendas controlled by profit- and career-driven offices and individuals (hence the Trump surge—I'm no Trump fan, by the way). This is another case in point.

Thank you.

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