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 
ofices and individuals (hence the Trump surge—I’m no Trump fan, by the way). This is 
another case in point.

Thank you.

Deborah Slicer, Ph.D.

[Signature]