Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Con) Click here to see Sarah speak

I rise to urge the Minister not to delay bringing forward the regulations, and I urge the House not to lose sight of the children and their families who are devastated by mitochondrial diseases. Of course it is absolutely right that the House debates the ethics, as so many Members have pointed out, but at times the language used has clouded those arguments. We have heard terms such as "eugenics", "three-parent babies", "designer babies". This is not about wanting to create a child who is more beautiful or more intelligent. This is about wanting to spare families and children from a lifetime of devastating medical problems. We have the potential to do that. I fully respect those who oppose this on ethical grounds—"they are entirely consistent in their views"—but I am concerned that there has been selective misquoting from the scientific evidence. The House is not really qualified to examine the evidence in detail, and that is why we have expert panels, and bodies such as the HFEA, to advise and regulate this, and they do so with a great deal of thoughtfulness and expertise.

We have to be clear that the third scientific review, the expert panel, which I regret has been selectively misquoted, has looked at that evidence and has concluded that it does not show that the technique is unsafe. We will not know whether the technique is effective until we allow trials in a human context—it may be that there are complications; we have to be honest about that, and we have to be honest that this is not the same as a blood transfusion—but we do know absolutely for certain that families and children are suffering now from these diseases. That is why, on the balance of the safety issues and the advice from the expert panels, we should not reject this on safety grounds.

The point made by Ian Paisley about the child sitting in front of him in his surgery whose parents would not change that child was particularly powerful. No one is asking to change a child. What we are asking is for future generations of children to be spared that part of them that creates the suffering, but to keep within them all the personality and everything else in their genetic make-up that makes them who they are.

I am also concerned to point out that if I were to donate my mitochondrial…

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Con): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order to ask whether Professor Lord Winston was consulted before his name was added to the motion on the Order Paper?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): It is in order to ask the question. I cannot give the hon. Lady an answer, but I have heard what she said, and I am sure that those who were involved in that have heard what she said. If the noble Gentleman was not consulted, I would consider that to be most discourteous.

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