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From the Editor's Desk

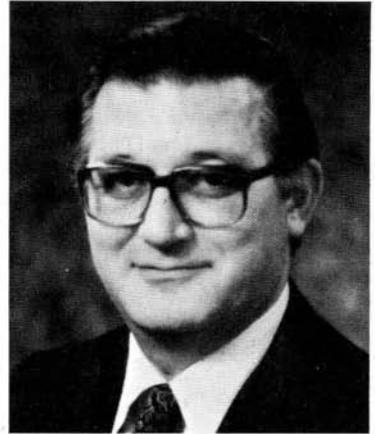
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The Human Genome Project and Bioethics

The Human Genome Project officially began Oct. 1, 1990 at the National Institute of Health and the Department of Energy. It is slated to last 15 years and is federally funded. The project is designed to map the human genome and to examine the fundamental hereditary unit of human life. The implications of the research are unknown at the present time, but one can be sure that effects of this research will be far ranging, with implications for future generations. The ethical aspects of this research, as far as society is concerned, are far from clear. Will the dignity and sacredness of human life be respected during this time? Will the project dehumanize the human race? Will the benefits of this research be so beneficial as to overwhelm our concern for the welfare of the individual?

We have seen a lack of concern for the dignity and sacredness of individuals in recent years, with widespread abortion, in vitro fertilization and surrogate motherhood. The most elemental rights of the newly conceived and gestated are disregarded. They were treated as objects to be disposed and manipulated according to the desires of scientists, doctors and parents. With this type of substrate and value system in our modern society, it is obvious that much concern is being raised as to the human genome project. Will this project redound to the benefit of mankind or push us along the road to the further dehumanization of the human race?

In the *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, published by Johns Hopkins University Press, (Vol. 1, No. 1, March 1991), Eric T. Jungst, Ph.D., of the National Center for Human Genome Research, outlines the ethical, legal and social implications of this project. It makes very interesting reading for those of us who are concerned about the sacredness and dignity of human life. If he and his division, which will oversee the bioethical concerns of this project, succeed in this venture, we shall be grateful. If his group is not founded in fundamental concern for the individual human being with all of its sacred rights and integrity, our trust and faith in the Human Genome Project will be vitiated from the start. Time will tell us how successful Jungst will be at carrying out his task. He may rest assured that his group will be closely watched. We wish him well.

—John P. Mullooly, M.D.
Editor
