

Vaccines Prepared from Cells Derived from Aborted Human Fetuses

A Statement of the Catholic Medical Association

The Catholic Medical Association provides these comments and recommendations regarding a recent statement commissioned by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and prepared by the Pontifical Academy for Life (PAFL; "*Moral Reflections on Vaccines Prepared from Cells Derived from Aborted Human Foetuses*" *) in order to carry on its mission of upholding the truth of the Catholic Faith in the science and practice of medicine.

The development and utilization of vaccines which effectively reduce and hopefully, eventually eradicate certain infectious diseases afflicting mankind is a "*milestone*" * of modern medical technology. The Catholic Church supports all morally legitimate means that medical science uses to prevent and alleviate suffering related to human illness. However, circumstances have arisen in which development and /or application of certain medical techniques, even though effective, are morally illicit and must be condemned and actively opposed. The recent statement of the PAFL addresses ethical questions regarding the "*lawfulness of production, distribution and use of certain vaccines whose production is connected with acts of procured abortion.*" *

An ethical problem exists today because some vaccines for rubella (Meruvax), Hepatitis A, (VAQTA, HAVRIX) as well as others, are derived from cell lines originally prepared from tissue taken from voluntarily aborted fetuses. The question is to what degree do those who participate in production, distribution or use of these vaccines "*cooperate in evil.*" * A brief consideration of the moral principles regarding cooperation led the authors of the document to several specific conclusions:

1) As regards every form of formal cooperation, it is always morally illicit and whoever participates by approving of, or sharing the intention in, the performance of voluntary abortion to procure tissue with the aim of producing vaccines, actually participates in the same grave moral evil as the one who performed the abortion.

2) As regards the preparation, distribution and marketing of these vaccines, this activity is morally illicit, because "*it could contribute in encouraging the performance of other voluntary abortions, with the purpose of producing such vaccines.*" * Therefore, those contributing to this activity, depending on the degree of their involvement in the activity and the gravity of their reasons for this involvement, may be guilty of immoral material cooperation - even when they are not formally cooperating.

3) As regards those physicians or patients who use these vaccines, even knowing their origin, they are permitted to use the vaccines when no effective alternative is available, and as necessary to avoid "*significant risks to their health*" and "*indirectly the [health of the] population as a whole.*" Such a choice "*occurs in a context of moral coercion...[they are] forced to choose to act against their conscience...This is an unjust alternative choice, which must be eliminated as soon as possible.*" *

Following the explanation regarding degrees of cooperation, there is a clear directive which obliges all of us *“to oppose by all means the vaccines which do not yet have morally acceptable alternatives, creating pressure so that alternative vaccines are prepared.”**

Based on this and other analysis of this issue from a Catholic moral perspective, the Catholic Medical Association makes the following recommendations to ensure that vaccines produced in ethically acceptable ways (hereinafter referred to as “alternative vaccines”) are made available as soon as possible.

1) When alternative vaccines are available, they must be used in place of those produced by immoral means.

2) When no alternative vaccines are available *“it is right [permissible] to abstain from using these vaccines if it can be done without causing children, and indirectly the population as a whole, to undergo significant risks to their health.”** In forming their conscience, parents should be aware that there is no absolute guarantee that an unvaccinated child will not expose a non immune pregnant woman to risk of infection with rubella.

3) When no alternative vaccines are available, it must be reaffirmed that the use of vaccines whose production is connected with acts of procured abortion is lawful *“on a temporary basis”** and *“insomuch as is necessary”** to avoid significant risk to the health of an individual or the community.

4) When no alternative vaccines are available, there is a *“moral duty to continue to fight and to employ every lawful means”** to pressure the pharmaceutical industry, government authorities and national health systems to make ethical alternatives available. Immediate action should include petitioning the FDA to allow for licensing and importation of safe and effective ethical alternative vaccines such as Takahashi (rubella) and Aimmugen (Hepatitis A). In addition, we encourage accurate labeling and informed consent for the use of all vaccines derived from cell lines connected with acts of procured abortion.

Finally, the Catholic Medical Association actively seeks to cooperate with all individuals and organizations in this effort to ensure all citizens the availability of morally acceptable vaccines. We believe a strong and united alliance for ethical health care is essential in an era of rapidly advancing medical technology to secure our freedom to act in accord with upright conscience.

* “Moral Reflections on Vaccines Prepared from Cells Derived from Aborted Human Foetuses” Pontifical Academy for Life, June 2005.