

Merck & Co., Inc.
770 Sumneytown Pike
P.O. Box 4
West Point, PA 19486-0004

November 1, 2000

Ms. Debra Vinnedge
Children of God for Life
2130 Catalina Drive
Clearwater, Florida 33764



Dear Ms. Vinnedge:

Thank you very much for your letter of 20 October 2000, regarding the use of human diploid cells for vaccine production.

Merck's commitment is to research and develop safe and effective vaccines, using the best available science and technology, and through collaboration with the medical and public health community, bring these vaccines to the greatest number of people. Merck scientists constantly search for ways to improve our vaccines, including the potential to eliminate all elements of human cells, serum, etc., from our line.

Several of Merck's current vaccines are developed in human diploid cell lines, as you mentioned. Human diploid cells are used to prepare vaccines against other serious or fatal diseases as well, including polio and rabies. We use these cell lines because they are the best science has to offer in terms of producing a safe and effective vaccine against certain diseases. Varicella (chicken pox) virus, for example, grows in a limited range of cells-- human and guinea pig. After 28 years of research and clinical trails, Merck scientists determined that the most effective vaccine to prevent varicella is produced in the former.

Human diploid cell lines, which are approved and maintained by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration under strict Federal guidelines, originated from two legal abortions in the United Kingdom and Sweden in the 1960s. These abortions were not undertaken with the intent of producing vaccines; rather the intent was to develop "normal" human cells for life saving scientific research.

No new fetal tissue is needed to produce cell lines to make vaccines, now or in the future.

Merck is not conducting or sponsoring fetal tissue transplantation research. Merck supports such research only in accordance with established Federal guidelines, which are designed to assure that such research is never conducted in a manner that might encourage elective abortions. Thank you again for contacting Merck on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eileen Dolick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eileen M. Dolick