

Fetal Tissue Statement

There are few examples of issues that rapidly lead to the clash of cultures, religious, scientific beliefs and politics as the use of fetal tissue in research. Our own institution has been wrapped up in this issue for many years, and the debate between those who advocate for the life-saving science that may come from fetal tissue research and those who believe that use of fetal tissue is morally wrong continues.

We are a public academic health center and as such, we attempt to serve all the health care needs of New Mexico and its diverse communities. We have been in a hiatus in fetal tissue research with an opportunity to re-assess our use of this tissue going forward. In consideration of all the sensitivities in this area of research, I am moved by the fact that these samples were proactively given by women for research that has the potential to improve the health of future generations.

So, after much consideration, I have decided that we will retain the samples for future investigators who may utilize the samples in a worthwhile and productive fashion. Of course, any UNM researcher wishing to make use of the samples would need to go through our stringent internal approval processes before proceeding.

We will also be modifying our policies and procedures to eliminate the use of fetal tissue in research that was derived from an abortion after the second trimester, following the trend of research intuitions across the U.S. The UNM Health System already does not perform pregnancy terminations beyond 24 weeks, except for cases of severe fetal anomaly or to preserve the health/life of the woman. Changing the acceptance requirements for donated fetal tissue will align our research policies with our pregnancy termination practices.

We remain absolutely committed to addressing the health and health equity of our population while recognizing that the way we go about doing this must reflect diversity of cultures of our state. It's important to always reflect on our approaches as our culture, our research and our ideals evolve so that we continue to strive for improved health and health equity in our state.