

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES BY DEPUTY
S.S.A.P. POWER OF ST. BRELADE**

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 29TH APRIL 2008

Question

“Given that improvements in neo-natal care have led to increasing numbers of babies surviving at earlier stages of gestation, would the Minister consider reducing the current abortion time limit of 24 weeks?”

Can the Minister give an indication to the Assembly of his position on the proposed Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill that will be coming to the House of Commons very soon?

What is the Minister's position on the results of research by Newcastle University that has produced human-animal "admixed" embryos?

What is the Minister's position on stem-cell cord blood research, whereby medical scientific research views that the harvesting and saving of blood contained in the umbilical cords of babies could hold the key to a range of life-saving treatments?”

Answer

The Deputy is alluding to some interesting developments concerning neonatal care and forthcoming changes to legislation on the mainland which will be debated in the House of Commons very shortly. The field of neonatology and stem cell cord research is a highly complex field of medicine which has attendant ethical dilemmas of great significance.

The Deputy is quite unrealistic if he believes that by Tuesday 29th April I can put myself in a position of considering these matters of medicine and of ethics, taking authoritative professional advice, and determining my own personal political position in all of this. I am assuming that the Deputy would wish me to deal with this subject with the seriousness and the application it deserves. Accordingly, might I suggest that the Deputy and I meet with appropriate clinicians within my Department in order that we can jointly explore these matters. I can then in due course advise the Deputy of 'my position' on the matters to which he alludes.