

## Is it time to abandon the 14-day rule limiting human embryo research?

[A] group of Harvard University scientists has published a paper arguing that it is time to reconsider the 14-day rule [on human embryo research] because of advances in synthetic biology. [NOTE: The '14-day rule' is a legal and regulatory line in the sand that has for decades limited *in vitro* human-embryo research to the period before the 'primitive streak' appears. This is a faint band of cells marking the beginning of an embryo's head-to-tail axis.] [WEBnature graphic stem cell](#)

The U.S. has no law against growing embryos beyond two weeks...But most scientific journals will not publish studies that violate the 14-day rule, and the International Society for Stem Cell Research requires its members to agree to the rule in order to qualify for membership.

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Now is the time to begin a public discussion on experiments such as these, argues [Harvard Medical School geneticist George Church], before it is scientifically viable and poses an ethical challenge to the 14-day rule.

Not surprisingly, these ideas have triggered some opposition among bioethicists. "In cases of doubt, where one has a suspicion but not certainty that one might be engendering an embryonic human, such experiments should not be continued," [stated Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, a neuroscientist and director of education at the National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia].

[The study can be found [here](#).]

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Ethical Guidelines on Lab-Grown Embryos Beg for Revamping, Scientists Say](#)**

**For more background on the Genetic Literacy Project, read [GLP](#) on Wikipedia.**