

Japan considers allowing human organs to be grown inside animals

A ban on creating human organs inside the bodies of animals will likely be lifted as early as this autumn, following a planned review of the current guidelines prohibiting such research.

An expert panel of the Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Ministry last month compiled a report on research into producing human organs in the bodies of pigs and other animals. In the report, the panel concluded it would allow researchers to implant an animal embryo (a fertilized egg) containing human cells into an animal's womb.

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The panel pointed out in the latest report that this research could lead to discovering the underlying causes of diseases, securing organs to be used for transplants, and developing new treatments. The panel thus concluded it would be appropriate to allow an animal embryo containing human cells to be transplanted into an animal's womb to be birthed, considering that such studies have already been allowed in the United States and Britain.

However, the panel in the same report decided not to allow research that could produce a creature ambiguous enough to blur the line between humans and other animals.

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A team led by University of Tokyo Prof. Hiromitsu Nakauchi has said it will carry out research to create a human pancreas inside a pig if the ban [is lifted].

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