

Podcast: 'Artificial womb' raises awkward ethical questions about abortion, child welfare and health freedom

Biotechnology is fundamentally changing food and medicine. Thanks to genetic engineering, for example, we have access vitamin-fortified [GMO crops](#), plentiful supplies of [insulin](#) and even new vaccines to combat infectious diseases. While these technologies remain controversial among some activist groups and consumers, the [tangible](#) health and environmental benefits of genetic engineering have countered most of the ethical concerns raised about manipulating DNA to produce desirable food crops and life-saving drugs.

ross studio cutout
Ross Pomeroy

But this doesn't tell the whole story. In the coming decades, certain developments in biotechnology will almost certainly force us to ask some awkward ethical questions—for which there aren't yet clear answers. So-called '[artificial womb](#)' technology is one such example. Recent [research suggests](#) that it may be possible one day to keep a human fetus alive outside its mother's uterus from fertilization to full-term infancy. This would be great news for the 30,000 babies born prematurely each year. However, if and when that technology leaves the realm of science fiction, the ongoing political debate over abortion, for instance, will never be the same. As RealClearScience editor Ross Pomeroy recently noted:

As artificial wombs arrive and push the age of fetal viability earlier and earlier, the debate over abortion will transition to one over "extraction." Imagine a world where the developing embryo is viable immediately at conception. Under current laws, states could potentially prohibit mothers from killing the fetus and require them instead to undergo an extraction procedure to place it in an artificial womb until it is ready to survive outside as a fully-formed baby.

On this episode of Biotech Facts and Fallacies, Pomeroy joins the GLP's Cameron English to explore how this artificial womb technology could drastically change the discussions we have about abortion, parental rights and even the government's role in our medical decisions.

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