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**SCIENTISTS APPEAL TO EDITORS TO GIVE LESS PROMINENCE TO BOGUS CLONING CLAIMS**

Some of the UK's leading scientists have written an open letter to media editors appealing to them to review the prominence given to maverick scientists claiming to have cloned the first human being.

Prompted by the huge media coverage of this weekend's announcement from Dr Panos Zavos, scientists express their dismay at having to respond to cloning claims, which have grabbed the headlines repeatedly over the past 2 years: "Despite the lack of evidence forthcoming on each occasion, we are still expected to respond every time a bogus claim is made".

Professor Chris Higgins, Director MRC Clinical Sciences Centre, Imperial College London and one of the signatories to the letter said:

"This is not a condemnation or an attack on the media – it is an appeal borne out of a widespread frustration at the ease with which these publicity seeking scientists appear to grab the headlines. While journalists did their best to challenge those scientists about why they choose to go public before submitting their work to the scrutiny of other scientists in the usual way, the very fact that the story achieved such prominence will have suggested that this is mainstream work."

The scientists are at pains to point out that they understand the story of the first human clone would be of huge public interest and accept that their priorities and concerns will differ radically to those guiding decision makers in the media. However they claim that within journalism there is a culture of respect for evidence to which they are appealing.

Those signing the letter are:

Prof Richard Gardner, FRS - Chair, Royal Society Working Group on Stem Cell Research and Cloning

Prof Colin Blakemore - Chief Executive, Medical Research Council (MRC)

Prof Julia Goodfellow - Chief Executive, Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)

Lord May of Oxford - President, Royal Society

Prof Robert Winston - Imperial College

Dr Simon Fishel - Director, Centres for Assisted Reproduction (CARE)

Suzi Leather - Chair, HFEA

Prof Chris Higgins - Director, MRC Clinical Sciences Centre, Imperial College

Prof Alison Murdoch - Chair, British Fertility Society

Dr Wolf Reik - Head, Developmental Genetics Programme, Babraham Institute

Prof Robin Lovell-Badge - Head of Genetics, MRC National Institute for Medical Research

Dr Harry Griffin - Deputy Director, Roslin Institute

Dr Sue Avery - Chair, Association of Clinical Embryologists

**\*Please find the letter attached\***

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:**

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