

Human Germline Gene Therapy: Scientific, Moral and Political Issues (Tissue Engineering Intelligence Unit)

Pamela J. Langer



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In the last decade, scholars throughout the world have begun to break the conversational taboo surrounding human genetic engineering. This book will contribute to this important discussion by providing an up-to-date summary and analysis of key issues in human germline gene therapy with the intention of laying the foundation for further debates and public policy decisions. Without denigrating or glorifying the new technology, the authors offer a sober assessment of its promises and delusions, its dreams and nightmares by presenting potential benefits and harms of human germline gene therapy from a scientific, ethical and political standpoint. The first part of the book provides a thorough and well-referenced introduction to the science underlying gene therapy, including a review of basic genetic concepts for non-molecular biologists, current and future methods for genetic testing, alternatives to human germline gene therapy, current gene transfer techniques, and the technology which would be required before human germline gene therapy could be attempted. The second part of the book considers the possible medical, evolutionary, economic, military, and psychosocial benefits and harms of human germline gene therapy and also considers the procedure from the perspective of human rights, justice, and interference with nature. The book concludes with some public policy recommendations and stresses the need for international cooperation in developing and implementing human germline gene therapy policies.

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