This article discusses the approval by The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority in the United Kingdom for two centers to create human-animal embryos to use for research. Both centers were granted a one year license for this reason after the HFEA held a consultation that showed that the public was “at ease” with this idea. The HFEA have decided to consider any other centers wishing to do this type of research on a case-by-case basis.

The scientists want to create these hybrids, which will be made with human cells and animal eggs, in hopes of extracting stem cells for further research. Under the license, the hybrid embryos will be destroyed within 14 days. Currently, scientists have to use human eggs that remain after fertility treatments. These are in short supply and are not always the best quality.

Both centers are planning to use the hybrids in different ways. Dr. Stephen Minger and his team from King’s College London want to use the hybrids to study diseases that are known to have genetic causes, like Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s disease, while Dr. Lyle Armstrong and his team from Newcastle University want to use the hybrids to help get a better understanding of how stem cells develop into different tissue. Dr. Armstrong has already done much work on transferring animal cells into cow eggs
and hopes that this development helps their progress with combining human cells and animal eggs. Many hope that this information will enable scientists to “grow new tissues” in the laboratory.

Although there may be a lot of support for this research, there are many people who do not agree with it, including John Smeaton, the national director of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, and Dr. Peter Saunders from the Christian Medical Fellowship. Both think that the research is unethical and unnecessary.

In my opinion, this research is rather unnecessary. I understand why these scientists would like this, they could produce more stem cells in this way, but I do not see why they cannot just use the eggs left over from fertility treatments like before. Yes, they would have fewer stem cells, but they would also not have as many adversaries on the issue. It would seem to me that if they did discover anything of importance from the hybrids’ stem cells, it would be harder to apply it to humans because of the animal eggs involved. Even if it is not hard to remove the animal portion to create the stem cells, I do believe that this is also unethical. I believe if this were brought up by American centers, it would cause more of an outcry than it did in the United Kingdom.