

SCIENCE/HEALTH

U.S. biologist to clone humans at site in Japan

By Jonathan Watts
THE LONDON GUARDIAN

TOKYO — A controversial U.S. biologist who plans to clone humans is setting up a base in Japan, where laws do not prohibit such research.

Richard Seed, a Chicago-born Harvard graduate who has no medical license, says cloning will make man immortal and closer to God. He revealed Tuesday that he has located a site and partial funding for an animal cloning laboratory and a human fertility clinic.

The facilities are seen as a stepping stone toward human

cloning, which Mr. Seed, an expert in the field for more than 30 years, claims is possible to achieve within two years.

Described by former colleagues as brilliant but slightly crazy, Mr. Seed caused an uproar earlier this year when he announced plans to clone himself.

President Clinton declared a five-year moratorium on human cloning, and the European Union has also issued a charter banning research in this field.

"It seems all countries or political groups have some reservations on human cloning. But there is an existing patient demand for the

service," Mr. Seed said.

His group has already acquired three-quarters of the \$20 million funding needed for the project and purchased land in Japan's northernmost island of Hokkaido.

According to the group's Tokyo consultant, James Ryan, the facilities will open next August and provide services for couples seeking infertility treatment.

"Our goal is to help people," Mr. Ryan said.

It is believed that, once the facilities are complete, Mr. Seed will begin work on trying to clone his third wife, Gloria. He had planned to clone himself but changed his

mind.

"I switched to a clone of my wife because people say if I clone myself it would be an ego trip," he said.

The cloning of his wife is still at research stage and will take about another two years before it is completed, he said.

"The clone is an identical twin of a donor — just 40 years younger," Mr. Seed said. "If you don't tell, nobody will know. Everybody has seen children that look just like their parents."

He has predicted that once the procedure is established, more than 500 human clones will be produced every year.

There are no laws against human cloning in Japan, though a government panel recently condemned research in the field as "socially impermissible for moral, ethical and safety reasons."

Japanese scientists, however, have opposed a legal ban on their activities — not least because they are conducting some of the world's most advanced research. In July Japanese scientists celebrated the birth of twin calves cloned from an adult cow. Since then, dozens of cloned cows have been born, and work has begun on trying to clone a cow from milk.

●Distributed by Scripps Howard