



STEM CELL RESEARCH

The Issue

"Stem cell research" is sparking much ethical and public policy dialogue.

Although stem cell research may produce breathtaking advances in spinal cord regeneration, organ transplants and Alzheimer's disease treatment, the technology also faces enormous challenges. The potential is, however, exciting.

Stem cells have the remarkable ability to develop into many different cell types. Stem cells can be harvested from adults, umbilical cords and placentas. In fact, work with adult stem cells is conducted at the CHRISTUS Spohn Health System. New research is showing that adult stems cells CAN be isolated and developed. Adult stem cell research advances have developed thrilling new treatments and medicines. In June of 2004, United States Senator Sam Brownback and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops cited the remarkable progress of quadriplegics treated with adult stem cells.

The other source of stem cells is human embryos. Despite much attention in the media and from some in the research community, the harvesting of stem cells from human embryos --- a process that destroys the embryo --- has not produced a single scientific advance.

In August 2001, President George W. Bush authorized federal funding for research on 78 pre-existing lines of embryonic stem cells created from destroyed embryos from in vitro fertilization clinics.

During the 2004 presidential campaign, stem cell research received a great deal of attention. In California, voters approved the \$6 billion Proposition 71 to allow embryonic stem cell research at California Universities, Medical Schools and research facilities.

Both Democrat and Republican lawmakers have urged President Bush to further alter the standards governing stem cell research, the president supports only the use of pre-existing stem cell lines for such research.

The CHRISTUS Health Position: Support Ethical Stem Cell Research

CHRISTUS Health supports responsible and ethical research using stem cells obtained from adults, placentas or umbilical cords. However, CHRISTUS Health opposes the use of embryonic stem cells for research. The destruction of embryos to obtain embryonic stem cells for research is morally wrong and is inconsistent with the mission and core values of CHRISTUS Health.

CHRISTUS Health's mission respects the dignity of human life through health care practices that maintain the values of integrity, excellence, compassion, and stewardship. CHRISTUS Health's responsibility to the communities it serves urges that funding not be diverted from the care of the more vulnerable in society to embryonic stem cell research. CHRISTUS Health's ministry was founded upon a commitment to health care for all. This commitment is based on Catholic social justice teaching and a mission of service to the poor.

All advances in stem cell research should proceed responsibly and with a strong eye towards ethical concerns. The use of embryonic stem cells, to date, has produced no new medicines or therapies. Research utilizing stem cells from other sources, including adult stem cells, holds the potential to produce further medical and scientific advancements without sacrificing a firm moral and ethical foundation.

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