

JUNE 2010

Human Life

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University of Nebraska Board of Regents. Advocates of embryo-destructive research turned that race into a referendum on embryonic stem-cell research. Clare, an opponent of embryo-destructive research, won by 16 percentage points.

That result was somewhat surprising in the government university bastion of Lincoln, but not that surprising when you consider that Nebraska voters keep electing to the Board of Regents, the Governor's Office, the State Legislature (nearly two-thirds), and Congress (entire delegation) candidates who reject embryo-destructive research.

In the Nebraska Legislature's floor debate on Legislative Bill 606, the 2008 law banning human cloning and destruction of human embryos at state facilities, Sen. Brad Ashford, chair man of the committee that handled LB 606, said, "There are other means of producing embryonic-like stem

cells that can be used in research without destroying an embryo, (which was) key to where we were going (in crafting LB 606)." Lead negotiator Sen. Steve Lathrop said, "LB 606 encourages the university to do research in the area of non-embryonic stem cell research."

Despite all of this, the University of Nebraska Medical Center is importing "fresh" stem cells from embryos destroyed elsewhere. UNMC does not destroy embryos, but by paying those who do,

UNMC fuels the demand for destruction of human embryos.

UNMC researcher Angie Rizzino, one of those using the new embryonic stem cells, told the New York Times last year that opponents of such research "do not understand the science."

NCER understands that valuable scientific information could be learned from studying stem cells harvested from embryos. We also understand the scientific fact that these are human lives, not just leftover eggs from fertility clinics. There are embryonic stem cells to harvest because living human embryos are producing them as part of the natural course of life at that stage.

The crux of the debate is ethics, not what we might learn. If obtaining knowledge were the only criterion for conducting research, we wouldn't need ethical guidelines for research on human subjects.

There is intrinsic value in human life. That's why reputable science observes guidelines guarding the dignity of human life. When you have to kill a human to get the desired cells, that changes the ethical equation.

Destruction of human life is not necessary to advance in stem-cell research. Research can continue moving forward as it has — with animal embryonic stem cells and now iPS cells.

We salute UNMC for its world-class work with adult stem cells and newer work with iPS cells. We hope these fields of stem-cell research — the ones that show the most success and promise without presenting ethical problems — are the kind of research on which UNMC builds its regenerative medicine institute.

Note: This column was printed in the Omaha World Herald on June 10 as a "Midlands Voices" feature.

More Embryonic Research Compromises Human Life

BY SHERYL PITNER, M.D.

Stem-cell research is advancing rapidly and has tremendous potential. But not all stem-cell research is the same, and not all stem-cell research is ethical.

Adult stem cells — which are harvested from the body, umbilical cord, placenta and amniotic fluid without harm to the donor — are being used to success fully treat many conditions in humans. New clinical trials are under way to expand their uses. The *World-Herald* recently noted the 20-year anniversary of the bone marrow transplant (an adult stem-cell procedure used for decades) that saved Omahan David Spence's life ("No cancer, no worries," May 3 news story).

Embryonic stem-cell research, on the other hand, has advanced at the expense of human life. Harvesting stem cells from embryos destroys the embryos. The Nebraska Coalition for Ethical

Research has laid out the basic facts of human embryology in this space before. Let's simply note that world renowned leaders in embryonic stem-cell research acknowledge that it destroys human lives, not just blobs of cells.

Since 2007, giants of embryonic stem-cell research have rearranged their careers to pursue an alternative to embryo destruction: induced pluripotent stem cells (iPS cells). Embryonic stem cells are pluripotent, meaning they can become any cell type in the body.

Scientists now can reprogram the genes of ordinary cells and turn them into pluripotent stem cells. These iPS cells have the properties of embryonic stem cells, but producing them does not require destruction of human life.

Tim Clare emphasized the iPS breakthrough in his 2008 race for the Lincoln-based seat on the

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Congressional Clone-and-Kill Research

President Barack Obama has changed the federal guidelines for embryonic stem cell research, allowing federal funds to be used for research with new embryonic stem cell lines — creating an increased demand for the destruction of human embryos for research.

House Resolution 4808 would legalize clone-and-kill research. The bill includes this language: "The term 'human cloning' means the implantation of the product of transferring the nuclear material of a human somatic cell into an egg cell from which the nuclear material has been removed or rendered inert into a uterus or the functional equivalent of a uterus."

The bill is trying to say that cloning is not complete until a cloned embryo is implanted in a womb. That echoes a standard argument by supporters of embryo-destructive research that a human embryo is not really a human being until it has implanted in the womb.

This is a scientifically unsound argument. A casual reading of a basic embryology textbook makes clear that human life is present upon

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Statements on HR 4808

"This bill permits ethically divisive research that manipulates and destroys human life. Such research is profit-driven rather than person-driven, and it is beneath the dignity of a compassionate society.

Instead, we should focus research efforts on ethical methods that are currently producing effective medical treatments."

— U.S. Congressman Jeff Fortenberry, 1st Congressional District

"I cannot support research that involves the destruction of human life, in this case human embryos. There have been significant advancements in the use of adult stem cells, research that I support, but this bill would use taxpayer money to fund unethical research and create a demand for further embryo destruction."

— U.S. Congressman Lee Terry, 2nd Congressional District

"Congressional action should always protect the sanctity of the unborn. The use of stem cells from non-embryonic sources, such as umbilical cord blood, has proven to advance medical technology without violating ethical principles."

— U.S. Congressman Adrian Smith, 3rd Congressional District



Sheryl Pitner, MD

The writer, an Omaha physician, is president of the Nebraska Coalition for Ethical Research.



NEBRASKA COALITION
FOR ETHICAL RESEARCH

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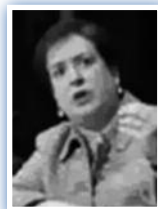
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U.S. Supreme Court Nominee Elena Kagan: A Record on Research



Will the U.S. Supreme Court be called upon to rule on human embryonic stem cell research? If that day comes and Supreme Court nominee Elena Kagan is one of the justices, let's hope she recuses herself for having already taken a position on the issue. The archives of the William J. Clinton Presidential Library include memos in which Kagan, serving in the Clinton administration, signed off on the recommendation that President Clinton approve cloning of human embryos for research.

Supporters of embryo-destructive research try to spin this position as a compromise: let's ban cloning of humans as a way of making new people, but let's allow cloning to make embryos to be destroyed for research.

The problem is that an embryo is a person. Cloning produces the same thing every time: a new human being. The only question is what you do with that new human being: let it live or kill it for research. Supporters of cloning for research call the second option "therapeutic" cloning. But it's really

clone-and-kill research because the policy is to clone humans and then kill them to harvest their stem cells for research.

So far there has been no successful cloning of humans, though scientists have been trying. Creepy though it might be, cloning would simply be a way of producing an identical twin outside the body. Then the cloned embryo would be implanted in a womb, brought to birth, and allowed to live its life as the identical twin of the person who provided the donor cell.

The position Kagan recommended is an assault on human dignity, just like abortion. Cloning for research is premeditated abortion. A new human being would be produced for the purpose of being destroyed for research.

It's disconcerting to ponder a justice on the highest court in the land who thinks it is unacceptable to use cloning to make humans for the purpose of living, but that it is okay to use cloning to make humans for the purpose of lethal experimentation.

News Digest Here's a roundup of recent developments in biomedical research. Find links to all of these items at the NCER web site, www.ethicalresearch.net.

Get More Adult Stem Cells in Circulation

Dr. Christian Drapeau, author of "Cracking the Stem Cell Code," explains his push for therapies that enhance the performance of adult stem cells in the body, rather than removing and manipulating them outside the body.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGDCqOGPKrk>

Breakthrough Could Aid Heart Patients

Scientists are extracting adult stem cells from blood vessels removed during surgery and using them to stimulate growth of new arteries. For example, a vein is removed from a patient's leg to accomplish a heart bypass. From the excess section of vein not used, stem cells could be harvested and used to help regenerate healthy blood vessels in the heart.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2010/apr/25/stem-cell-breakthrough-leftover-veins>

Researchers Attracted to Procedure Using Magnets

In animal trials, scientists are treating heart attacks by infusing micro-particles of iron into cardiac adult stem cells and using magnets to guide the stem cells to the damaged portion of the heart. One challenge in such procedures is delivering the stem cell exactly where they need to be. Use of magnets has caused stem cells to gather

more quickly and in greater concentration at the point of treatment, and has helped the heart retain the stem cells.

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/04/100408160900.htm>

Faith & Science Working Together

The University of Maryland is getting financial help from a source that has strongly supported adult stem cell research. The Vatican, which has hosted conferences on adult stem cell research, is donating \$2.7 million to a U of M project seeking cures to intestinal and other diseases. The Catholic Church is sometimes mistakenly described as anti-stem cell research. It opposes only research that involves the destruction of human embryos.

http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2010-04-23-vatican-stemcell-research_N.htm

More Good News in Heart Repair

One of the first areas of dramatic progress in stem cell research was repair of damaged heart tissue. Researchers are now injecting adult stem cells, harvested from the patient's own body, into the heart during surgery so the enhanced healing process can begin immediately.

<http://www.vancouversun.com/health/Stem+cells+help+heart+regeneration+after+surgery+Study/2905302/story.html>

Citizen Education

The Nebraska Coalition for Ethical Research has continued in its mission of education and equipping citizens to engage on important research issues. In recent months, the NCER road show has made presentations to multiple venues throughout eastern Nebraska:

- **Bishop Neumann Central High School in Wahoo** hosted NCER Board Member Greg Schleppebach.
- **Fremont Area Right to Life** heard from NCER President Dr. Sheryl Pitner obliged.
- **St. Margaret Mary's Right to Life in Omaha** welcomed both. Dr. Pitner and NCER Communications Director Chip Maxwell.
- **Omaha Marian High School** hosted Maxwell for a Morality class.

Schools are some of the most important places NCER presents its road show. **Anna Heffron** organized an NCERfest at Omaha



Skutt Catholic High School. Anna is a senior track athlete who was named to the *Omaha World-Herald's* all-state scholastic team, scored a perfect 36 on her ACT, won scholarships to top schools in the nation, and is headed to Notre Dame to study biochemistry. She did a major project on stem cell research. Part of it was to interview Maxwell extensively on the topic and then coordinate presentations to all of the junior religion classes. Maxwell presented seven road shows over two days.

NCER gets a steady stream of requests from schools, sometimes from teachers but more often from students. Young people are taking an interest in this issue and want to get the full story, not just what they get from the media. How encouraging it is to know that a star like Anna Heffron goes shooting into the field of science with a fully formed conscience to guide her intellect.

Nebraska Developments in Research

UNMC Researchers Get New Embryonic Stem Cell Line

The University of Nebraska Medical Center is engaging in research that increases the demand for destruction of human embryos.

A UNMC researcher has obtained one of the first new human embryonic stem cell lines approved for use since President Obama lifted a ban on federal funding for embryo-destructive research in March 2009.

In November, NU regents failed to pass a proposal to limit the destruction of embryos for

research purposes at the university, opening the door to expanded human embryonic stem cell research at UNMC.

Regent Jim McClurg, who was appointed by then Governor Johanns and was formerly endorsed by Nebraska Right to Life, cast the deciding vote against the pro-life resolution.

The resolution would have limited embryonic stem cell research to only those stem cell lines approved under President George W. Bush.

http://journalstar.com/news/local/article_dcd1b5c4-546f-11df-8404-001cc4c002e0.html

Clone-and-Kill

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completion of fertilization – or in the case of cloning, upon completion of the process in which the nucleus of a donor cell is inserted into an egg that has had its nucleus removed.

Whether a human embryo is traveling through the fallopian tube on its way to the womb or is suspended in a lab dish, it is alive and capable of continued development. That fact that it has produced stem cells that scientists want to harvest proves that it is a living human prior to implantation!

But pro-cloning advocates want to make implantation in the womb the threshold for humanity so that embryos produced by cloning and still in lab dishes can be declared not-yet-human, and thus fair game for research.

Nebraska's House of Representatives delegation remains resolutely opposed to the systematic production and destruction of embryonic humans for research. Those who pursue such research see cloning as the preferred method of production.



NEBRASKA COALITION FOR ETHICAL RESEARCH, INC.

PO Box 540311
Omaha, NE 68154

402-690-2299

www.ethicalresearch.net
info@ethicalresearch.net

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