

HUMAN STEM CELL RESEARCH AND USE

The field of stem cell research offers great promise for the advancement of medical science. Adult stem cells are presently being used to treat a variety of illnesses. However, the isolation of human embryonic stem cells in 1998 and resultant research have raised moral concerns because current methods of procuring embryonic stem cells require the destruction of human life.

CMDA recognizes the potential value of stem cell technology*:

- We endorse the goals of stem cell research to treat human illness and relieve human suffering.
- We endorse retrieval and use of adult stem cells from a variety of sources – umbilical cord blood, placenta, amniotic fluid, adult organs, etc.
- We endorse human adult stem cell research and use if it is safe for human subjects.
- We endorse animal stem cell research provided it is not cruel to experimental animals.

CMDA has moral concerns regarding embryonic human stem cell research and use. We recognize the sacred dignity and worth of human life from fertilization to death.†

- The destruction of nascent individual human life even for the benefit of others is immoral.
- We condemn specious arguments that “excess” embryos may be used as a source for embryonic stem cells, “because they would have been destroyed anyway and that good may come.” There is a moral difference between intentionally taking a human being’s life and the embryo dying a natural death.
- We are concerned that stem cell research will involve exploitation of women (especially poor women) by using them to produce the eggs necessary for stem cell research, thereby subjecting them to the risk of attendant procedures and potential complications.
- We are concerned that the instrumental production, use, commodification or destruction of any human being will coarsen our society’s attitude toward human life itself.

Conclusion

CMDA advances the following moral guidelines to direct stem cell research and therapy:

- No human life should be produced by any means for primarily utilitarian purposes – no matter how noble the ends or widespread the benefit.
- Technology and research must not involve the abuse or destruction of human life.
- We encourage the careful and ethical development of alternative methods for procuring stem cells that do not involve the destruction of human life.

CMDA encourages life-honoring stem cell research for the advancement of medical science and the benefit of all patients. In this pursuit, CMDA advocates the protection of all human life, for humans are made in the image of God.

* At this time stem cells are classified either as adult or embryonic. Adult stem cells are derived from body tissues such as bone marrow, fat, heart, liver, lung, muscle, pancreas, skin, as well as from placenta and cord blood. Embryonic stem cells are removed from the developing embryo, resulting in destruction of the embryo.

† See Sanctity of Human Life.

*Approved by the House of Representatives
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