

# Embryonic Stem Cells: Hope or Hype?

The Canadian Institute for Health Research (CIHR) has released its guidelines on stem cell research which would allow federal funding for research on human embryos. North Bay Right to Life opposes embryonic stem cell research because human embryos would be destroyed in the process. Human beings exist from the moment of fertilization. Physicians for Life, in their April 2001 response to the CIHR's discussion paper on Human Stem Cell Research, have said:



“It is an objective scientific fact that human life begins at conception/ fertilization. This is not a “faith” position or a “belief”. We are human beings even at the one cell stage. A human embryo is not a “potential human being”. It is a human being. It is precisely what a human being looks like at that point of his or her life.”

News reports regularly herald potential cures for illnesses such as Parkinson's, diabetes, spinal injury and other diseases through the use of embryonic stem cells, but to date attempts have not been successful.

There is good news from research on alternative sources of stem cells. So far virtually all of the current benefits to patients have come from non-destructive stem cell sources. Some alternative sources of stem cells are: adult bone marrow cells, umbilical cords and placentas from live births, blood and brain cells of adults - all of which can provide stem cells without necessitating the destruction of human life.

Many studies using adult stem cells have provided very encouraging results. For example, researchers at McGill University have developed a way to harvest stem cells from skin. These stem cells came from the skin of an adult human's scalp and the skin of adult mice. These cells are capable of growing into brain cells and a range of other tissues. An advantage of using adult stem cells harvested from the patient's body would mean that there would be very little chance of rejection of the new tissue.

**We support research to alleviate human suffering but not at the expense of another human being.**

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