



**DO NO
HARM**

The Coalition of Americans
for Research Ethics

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“As to diseases ,make a habit of two things —
to help, or at least *do no harm.*”
— Hippocrates, *The Epidemics* —

**THE “POLITICAL SCIENCE” OF STEM CELLS
LESSON 1: THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH**

Congress may vote soon on whether to divert taxpayer dollars toward stem cell research that requires destroying live human embryos. In the campaign to promote such funding, political hype has often substituted for the scientific facts. This series will help members of Congress distinguish mere politics from science.

POLITICAL:

“If scientists are correct, stem cell research could result in a veritable fountain of youth by replacing diseased or damaged cells.”

- Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, Congressional Record, March 16, 2005, p. S2764

SCIENCE:

“The emerging truth in the lab is that pluripotent stem cells are hard to rein in. The potential that they would explode into a cancerous mass after a stem cell transplant might turn out to be the Pandora's box of stem cell research.”

- Ethicist Glenn McGee of University of Pennsylvania, quoted in E. Jonietz, “Innovation: Sourcing Stem Cells,” *Technology Review*, January/February 2001, p. 32

It is Dr. McGee’s concern that is being borne out by the science. Tulane University research professor Brian Butcher says: “We’re not against stem-cell research of any kind. But we think there are advantages to using adult stem cells. **For example, with embryonic stem cells, a significant number become cancer cells, so the cure could be worse than the disease.**” See Heather Heilman, “Great Transformations,” *The Tulanian*, Spring 2004, at www2.tulane.edu/article_news_details.cfm?ArticleID=5155.

That fountain of youth seems less appealing when it might become a cancerous eruption of many cell types at once in a patient’s body. The political hype about embryonic stem cells is ignoring real dangers to patients.

For more information to help distinguish politics from science on stem cell research, see our web site at www.stemcellresearch.org.