



**DO NO
HARM**

The Coalition of Americans
for Research Ethics

FOUNDING MEMBERS

Kevin Fitzgerald, S.J., Ph.D.

Research Associate,
Division of Hematology and Oncology
Loyola University Medical Center

C. Christopher Hook, M.D.

Hematology/Medical Oncology,
The Mayo Clinic (MN);
Chair, Mayo Clinical Ethics Council,
Mayo Reproductive Medicine Advisory
Board and DNA Research Committee

Ralph Miech, M.D., Ph.D.

Associate Professor (Emeritus)
of Pharmacology
Brown University School of Medicine

Robert D. Orr, M.D.

Director of Ethics, FAHC
University of Vermont
College of Medicine

Edmund Pellegrino, M.D.

Center for Clinical Bioethics
Georgetown University Medical Center

David Prentice, Ph.D.

Senior Fellow for Life Sciences
Family Research Council
Center for Clinical Ethics
Georgetown University

Frank E. Young, M.D., Ph.D.

Former Commissioner,
U.S. Food and Drug Administration;
Dean Emeritus,
School of Medicine and Dentistry,
University of Rochester;
Director, Reformed Theological
Seminary, Metro Washington

Joseph Zanga, M.D.

Chairman,
Department of Pediatrics
Loyola University Medical Center

1100 H Street, NW
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20005
PH: 202-347-6840
Fax: 202-347-6849
www.stemcellresearch.org

“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 7: IT’S NOT POLITICAL HYPE THAT WILL GET PEOPLE WALKING AGAIN

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 we do the work that we can do in this country, the work that we will do when John Kerry is president, people like Christopher Reeve are going to walk, get up out of that wheelchair and walk again.”

- Sen. John Edwards, vice-presidential candidate, on embryonic stem cells, October 11, 2004

SCIENCE:

“It appears though, at the moment, that embryonic stem cells are effective in treating acute injuries and are not able to do much about chronic injuries.”

- Christopher Reeve, chronic spinal cord injury patient, interview in October 2004 Reader’s Digest, www.rd.com/content/openContent.do?contentId=13712.

In one of his last public statements, Christopher Reeve conceded that embryonic stem cells were not showing promise for chronic spinal cord injury patients like himself. He had seen the preliminary results of ESC trials in rats conducted by Hans Keirstead of UC Irvine, now published in *The Journal of Neuroscience* (www.jneurosci.org/cgi/content/abstract/25/19/4694).

In fact the modest improvements shown here in a few rats with spinal cord injury – improvements which occurred only if the cells were provided within days of the injury -- have been superceded by advances in adult stem cells. These cells have shown better results even in animal studies – see Senate testimony of Jean D. Peduzzi-Nelson, Ph.D., July 14, 2004, at www.stemcellresearch.org/testimony/peduzzi-nelson.htm.

Moreover, adult stem cells from patients’ own nasal cavity (olfactory mucosa) have already been used in Portugal to benefit dozens of chronic spinal cord injury patients -- including several Americans who began to walk with braces after years of chronic paralysis. They have told their story in congressional testimony, <http://my.webmd.com/content/article/89/100250.htm>, and on the PBS-TV program *Miracle Cell*, www.pbs.org/wnet/innovation/transcript_episode6.html. Unlike embryonic stem cell research, this approach is not receiving federal funds in the U.S.

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

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