“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 11: NOT MONTHS OR DAYS, BUT DECADES

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 federal subsidies, political hype has far distanced itself from what science tells us. This series will help members of Congress distinguish mere politics from science.

POLITICAL:

“People are dying from diseases and medical conditions that might be cured through embryonic stem-cell research. For these people, every month matters. And every day of delay by the Senate has life-and-death consequences.”  Sen. Tom Harkin in Roll Call, Sept. 23, 2005

SCIENCE:

“Much of the California electorate was sold last year on the idea that human embryonic stem cells might be turned into amazing cures for incurable diseases, propelling Proposition 71 to easy victory in the Nov. 2004 election. Now, it’s increasingly clear that stem cell transplants for diabetes or Parkinson’s or Alzheimer’s are nowhere close, maybe decades away.”


“One of the problems is that in order to persuade the public that we must do this work; we often go rather too far in promising what we might achieve… I am not entirely convinced that embryonic stem cells will, in my lifetime, and possibly anybody’s lifetime for that matter, be holding quite the promise that we desperately hope they will.”


“It is necessary that prospective [egg] donors recognize the large gap between research and therapy… Researchers must make every effort to communicate to these volunteers that it is extremely unlikely that their contributions will directly benefit themselves or their loved ones. Also, it is nearly certain that the clinical benefits of the research are years or maybe decades away. This is a message that desperate families and patients will not want to hear.”


“Researchers say it could be decades before embryonic stem cells cure anything.”


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

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