



**DO NO  
HARM**

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

May 10, 2005

Dear Member of Congress:

As Congress considers whether to use its funding power to promote the destruction of human embryos for their stem cells, the attached letter from 57 scientists and professors of medicine may be of interest.

The signers wrote this letter to presidential candidate John Kerry last October. They were alarmed at the misleading and “scientifically irresponsible” claims he and others had made in support of embryonic stem cell research. The letter received little public attention in the flurry of media activity surrounding a presidential election; but its judgments remain sound and deserve your careful attention. (The letter is also available online at [www.stemcellresearch.org/pr/kerry.pdf](http://www.stemcellresearch.org/pr/kerry.pdf)).

From a sober scientific perspective, the signers pointed out, embryonic stem cells pose just one especially controversial avenue of research, which may or may not provide a treatment for any condition in human beings. Certainly there is no evidence today that they promise cures unobtainable by other, less ethically problematic means.

Recent months have provided further support for these judgments. Stem cells from adult tissues and umbilical cord blood have continued to advance toward treating devastating diseases (see [www.stemcellresearch.org](http://www.stemcellresearch.org)). And even scientists who support embryonic stem cell research are coming forward to urge reduced expectations for that avenue, fearing that the “extravagant claims of progress and cures” dominating this debate will create a backlash against them when the public realizes the truth (e.g., see D. Shaywitz, “Stem Cell Reality,” *The Washington Post*, April 29, 2005, p. A23).

Congress should make its decisions based on sound ethics and well-documented medical benefits, not hyped promises that cannot be kept. Patients deserve no less.

Sincerely,

Gene Tarne  
Communications director