

findings

THE NEWSLETTER OF NEBRASKANS FOR RESEARCH



NOVEMBER 2004

Nebraskans For Research —

Educational Push through Community Forums

Over the past year, NFR has organized forums in Lincoln, Hastings and Scottsbluff to educate Nebraskans on our organization and the importance of medical research to all of us.

In Hastings on September 9th, Sanford Goodman of NFR presented remarks designed to provide the more than 80 participants with a background on both the science of human embryonic stem cell research as well as questioning the mis-leading arguments used by those in opposition to stem cell research.

During the remarks, Mr. Goodman clearly stated that there is no question that the scientific and medical facts justify a legally enforceable ban on human reproductive cloning.

But the type of process — erroneously dubbed “therapeutic cloning,” where the nucleus of an unfertilized egg is replaced by scientists with the nucleus of an ordinary skin cell (or somatic cell), a pluri-potent stem cell can be created that is genetically matched to the skin cell donor.



Public Advocacy Director Sanford Goodman speaks to crowd at Nebraskans for Research Hastings Forum.



Bev Mauer, Former Hastings Regent Bob Allen and wife Georgene Allen, member of Nebraskans For Research Advisory Board, and Sanford Goodman.

This procedure, nuclear transfer to create NT-stem cell lines, has been unfortunately named therapeutic cloning. Utilizing this process allows scientists to begin to develop research programs more carefully targeted to understanding the very bio-molecular processes underlying diseases.

This type of process is where a great deal of NFR's battles have focused in the Nebraska Legislature most recently, and will in the future. In 2004 NFR fought back efforts to pass legislation that would have made it illegal to use this process in medical

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Only Stem-Cell Choice: Whether to Proceed

This article was written by Sandy Goodman and printed in the Omaha World Herald on October 9, 2004 as an Opinion Editorial in response to the human embryonic stem cell debate.

The writer, of Omaha, is chairman of the Public Policy and Advocacy Committee of Nebraskans for Research.

Although milder than some, Russ Moulds' column (Oct. 3 *Midlands Voices*) on the personhood issue underlying the debate over the use of human embryonic stem cells in promising medical research violates standards of fairness, logic and argumentation, as have others who oppose this research.

Moulds misrepresents statements of research supporters, raises unrelated historical atrocities in an attempt to scare readers, feints toward a pluralistic viewpoint and then ultimately declares the absolute certainty of his own position unilaterally and without logical justification, disguising it in the form of seemingly unobjectionable sentiments.

Moulds quotes the clearly stated moral views of a leading stem-cell researcher and his bioethicist colleague. In the words of Professors Ruth Faden (bioethics) and John Gearhart (stem-cell biology) of Johns Hopkins University (Sept. 7 *More Commentary*):

"While we recognize and respect embryos as early forms of human life, we do not believe that embryos in a dish have the same moral status as children and adults. We believe that the obligation to relieve human suffering binds us all and justifies the instrumental use of early embryonic life."

The moral choice they outline is whether to proceed with that which scientific consensus deems a uniquely promising approach to the development of cures and treatments for many of the most debilitating diseases that afflict mankind.

These include Parkinson's disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, cancer and - despite recent, highly publicized and appropriate cautions as to its difficulty — Alzheimer's.

Of course, as with all scientific research, the elapsed time from basic laboratory research (where we are now) to clinically available cures and treatments is realistically years (most likely, a decade or more) away.

Moulds' most obvious and blatant misrepresentation of the professors' views comes when he states that "Faden and Gearhart essentially offer the manifesto that when relieving human suffering is the aim, all is permissible."

In their article, they do not say that "all is permissible" — only the specific act of using embryos in dishes for medical research that are still a clump of cells not visible to the human eye and will be destroyed in any event in fertility clinics where they are no longer needed.

Moulds also reinterprets Faden and Gearhart's statement to mean that the "potential to relieve suffering trumps any philosophical, ethical and theological grounds for defending some alternate understanding of personhood."

This collapses into one statement what is in fact a two-step argument. Faden and Gearhart first state clearly their belief that embryos in a dish do not have the same moral status as children and adults. While they do not detail their reasoning, this is no doubt based in part on the circumstances surrounding the embryos in question.

Faden and Gearhart also make the judgment that they prefer saving lives if forced to choose between saving the life of a child or an adult and throwing away a microscopic embryo of less than 500 individual cells that corresponds to no possible future person.

Moulds' characterization of Faden and Gearhart's view as "anything goes" also fails to take account of the clear and explicit statement in their article that they "believe that it is possible to draw morally relevant lines and to enforce them as a matter of national policy."

Moulds implicitly dismisses this enduring feature of contemporary American society when he compares human embryonic stem-cell research to a litany of 20th-century abuses committed primarily by fascist and totalitarian regimes.

Such fear-mongering demeans all of us and our ability to address issues of profound societal importance. It is also important to understand that it is one thing to assess personhood at the cellular level and another at the level of the more fully developed organism.

Moulds is right that the personhood question remains open in this liberal democracy, even though he asserts the primacy of his own view. The question remains open for each of us to determine according to the dictates of individual conscience.

But, as I have quoted previously in these pages (*Midlands Voices*, Oct. 1, 2002), a Hastings Center philosopher, Erik Parens, has noted:

"The nation's founders understood that sometimes disagreements about policy matters would be rooted in deep religious and philosophical commitments. Such disagreements have to be resolved through political process. In accordance with that process, the government must sometimes implement determinations that conflict with the fundamental values of some citizens."

Our political process is choosing this research. Let's move forward.



Post Campaign Report

By Richard Lombardi, NFR Lobbyist

The 2004 Election is over and many are ready for a well-deserved break from politics. But frankly we must always deal with politics on the medical research front. And the landscape is always changing.

Half of the Senators in the Nebraska Unicameral Legislature were up for election or re-election on November 2nd. Listed below are the newly elected Senators and those who won re-election. (Please note that in a couple of races your vote certainly does count.) We encourage those who support medical research to become familiar with their Senator and ask questions about their views on this important topic.

On the Congressional Front Lee Terry was re-elected in the Second Congressional District (Omaha area) and Jeff Fortenberry was elected to his first term from the First Congressional District (Lincoln and the Eastern third of the state); both support President Bush's current position on stem cell research. Their opponents, State Senators Matt Connealy and Nancy Thompson — each who saw the area of medical research as important to saving lives in the future — will return to the Nebraska Legislature for two years.

As Nebraskans for Research prepares for the 2005 Legislative Session we will be working with State Senators on legislation protecting the concepts of medical research and stem cell research. As details emerge we will be contacting NFR supporters to work with us to ensure doors do not close on future breakthroughs.

STATE SENATORS Elected or Re-Elected this month:

District	(County or Counties represented)	Senator's Name	% of Vote Received
Dist. 1	(Cass, Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Richardson)	Lavon Heidemann	51%
Dist. 3	(Sarpy County)	Gail Kopplin	62%
Dist. 5	(Douglas, Sarpy)	Sen. Don Preister	(no opposition)
Dist. 7	(Douglas)	Sen. John Synowiecki	(no opposition)
Dist. 9	(Douglas)	Gwen Howard	57%
Dist. 11	(Douglas)	Sen. Ernie Chambers	(no opposition)
Dist. 13	(Douglas)	Sen. Lowen Kruse	69%
Dist. 15	(Dodge)	Sen. Ray Janssen	(no opposition)
Dist. 17	(Dakota, Dixon, Wayne)	Sen. Pat Engel	60%
Dist. 19	(Madison)	Mike Flood	(no opposition)
Dist. 21	(Lancaster, Saunders)	Sen. Carol Hudkins	(no opposition)
Dist. 23	(Butler, Colfax, Douglas, Sarpy, Saunders)	Chris Langemeier	53%
Dist. 25	(Lancaster)	Sen. Ron Raikes	(no opposition)
Dist. 27	(Lancaster)	Sen. DiAnna Schimek	(no opposition)
Dist. 29	(Lancaster)	Sen. Mike Foley	70%
Dist. 31	(Douglas)	Rich Pahls	by 94 votes
Dist. 33	(Hall, Adams)	Carroll Burling	55%
Dist. 35	(Hall)	Sen. Ray Aguillar	(no opposition)
Dist. 37	(Buffalo)	Sen. Joel Johnson	68%
Dist. 39	(Douglas, Sarpy)	Sen. Dwite Petersen	(no opposition)
Dist. 41	(Antelope, Boone, Garfield, Greeley, Hall, Howard, Sherman, Valley, Wheeler)	Sen. Vickie McDonald	(no opposition)
Dist. 43	(Blaine, Boyd, Brown, Cherry, Custer, Holt, Hooker, Key Paha, Logan, Loup, McPherson, Rock, Thomas)	Deb Fischer	by 125 votes
Dist. 45	(Sarpy)	Abbie Cornett	56%
Dist. 47	(Arthur, Banner, Cheyenne, Deuel, Garden, Keith, Kimball)	Sen. Phil Erdmann	(no opposition)
Dist. 49	(Box Butte, Cherry, Dawes, Grant, Scottsbluff, Sheridan, Sioux)	Sen. LeRoy Loudon	(no opposition)

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Community Forums

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research — defining all so called “cloning” as illegal, even criminal. NFR seeks to define the difference between these two very different issues during the 2005 legislative session.

The Lincoln, Hastings and Scottsbluff Forums provided an opportunity for local citizens to ask questions and get the facts related to stem cell research and the importance of medical research in Nebraska. NFR plans future forums in Kearney, Albion and several other locations across the state in 2005.

For more information or if your community would welcome a forum presentation, please contact NFR at 402-475-0727 or through our website:

www.nebraskansforresearch.org.

To access additional information on the issues in Sanford Goodman’s overview the President’s Council on Bioethics, Monitoring Stem Cell Research, provides a good overview. It is also available online and again addition information can be found on the NFR website.

MEMBERSHIP

If you are already a member, renew your membership by completing the form below. If you are not yet a member, please join us in protecting the future of medical research in Nebraska!

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Contributions are tax-deductible.

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