

FACE OFF:

Embryonic stem-cell research

Over-cautious inhibit use of promising research

Ben Maras
The Clackamas Print


As the baby-boomer generation creeps closer to old age, one of the first things on the minds of many Americans is the onslaught of the many ailments of old age. Now, new and exciting treatments show promise in eliminating many of the scourges which have led old age to be a thing to fear.

Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, Lou Gehrig's—all of which could be eradicated, along with a slew of other neurological diseases, with the help of a few tiny little cells. Not just any cells, but stem cells.

Where do these stem cells come from? They can come from any number of places, but the most useful and most promising ones are embryonic stem cells. The embryonic cells come from a number of places, including the umbilical cord, and sometimes even an unused embryo itself.

To think of a day when the paralyzed could walk free again, when those stricken in their youth with a progressive neurological disease could live out their lives as normal human beings, and we could make full use of the wisdom of old age by striking down the diseases which make their twilight years dim ones. This day is now, if we let it be.

The dawning of this new era would be the next big step for mankind, but sadly it is opposed by fundamentalists who cannot see the forest for the trees.

It's not that I overlook their concern. For quite some time, I myself was uncomfortable with the idea of embryonic stem cell research, but many factors have led me to completely reverse my opinion.

Seeing my own grandmother die slowly of Alzheimer's was a painful and life-changing one. Bearing witness to the slow deterioration of both mind and body, and the effects it has on family, is enough to make someone reconsider their stances.

As a result of this situation, the thought intrigues me that a few cells could save a person in this situation, and have their family's last memories of them be of a vital human being. But since I do not want this to be a wholly emotional argument, I will say no more on this subject.

I can fully understand their moral opposition. I wish, however, that they would go all the way and be consistent with their objection and be against in vitro fertilization, which is where the embryo cells come from.

For those who don't know, in vitro fertilization is the process in which multiple eggs are taken and fertilized, then grown, and the strongest embryo of these is then implanted into the mother and developed into a baby. What happens to the rest of them? They face a life in the dumpster, as they are now unusable.

Unusable that is, unless you count their use to save a human life. But no—apparently it's OK to waste the life that will be destroyed anyway, just not to use it for good.

In the end, when one looks at the facts and rationality, it is easy to see how important stem cell research is, not only to America, but to the human race, and why the overly cautious are hindering one of the most important developments in the history of the human race.

Embryonic stem cell research denies human equality

Shannon Armstead
Commentary Editor


The current debate over embryonic stem cell research raises critical moral questions about the value and meaning of human life. With Nancy Reagan's lobbying for the process as a means to further medical science, the issue has been brought even further into the public eye as a noble cause, yet its moral implications grant it a process that should never be implemented.

Stem cell research includes research on all stem cells, such as those found in bone marrow and other parts of the human body; the debate over the issue begins with the idea of embryonic stem cell research which creates and then kills human embryos to use their stem cells for research.

Arguments from supporters of EMC spring from the idea that an embryo is not a human being, or that it is not a significant human being. First, let's examine the fact that an embryo is in fact a human being.

According to human embryologists an embryo is distinct from any other cell of the mother or father and it is fully programmed with the active disposition to mature itself. Each human being is programmed with 46 chromosomes; from day one of concep-

tion every one of those chromosomes exists in a human being in its earliest stages of life, the embryo.

Using the term embryo is like saying an "infant" or "12-year-old." It simply describes a stage in life. An "embryo" is not a different kind of thing than human; it is just as much a person as a human infant is a person.

The fact that embryos are individual human beings cannot be denied, yet some argue that a human embryo is not a significant life. An argument taken from this standpoint reflects the idea that a person is not a person unless they showcase certain qualifying attributes.

However, realization of a human being's abilities — such as their appearance and rational powers as an adult, is simply the presentation of functions inherent in every human substance, from the moment it is brought into being. It is possible to lose and regain these functions throughout life, but the human substance remains the same.

If a human's value is hinged on these certain accidental functions, then human equality does not exist. If human equality does not exist, there is no principle on which to base human rights, especially to those who do not showcase these abilities, such as the mentally inhibited or comatose.

One can only affirm the view that all humans have equal rights by insisting that human beings are intrinsically valuable because they inherit a singular nature from the moment they come into existence. What a human being is, not what he or she does, makes them an object of rights.

Embryonic stem cell research exchanges the lives of many unseen human beings for the possible salvation of those who bring significance to our immediate lives. A 60-year-old man with Alzheimer's, or the image of the late Chris Reeves in his wheelchair, may illicit more emotion and sympathy than an embryo that cannot be seen, yet the fact remains that neither possess more of a right to live.

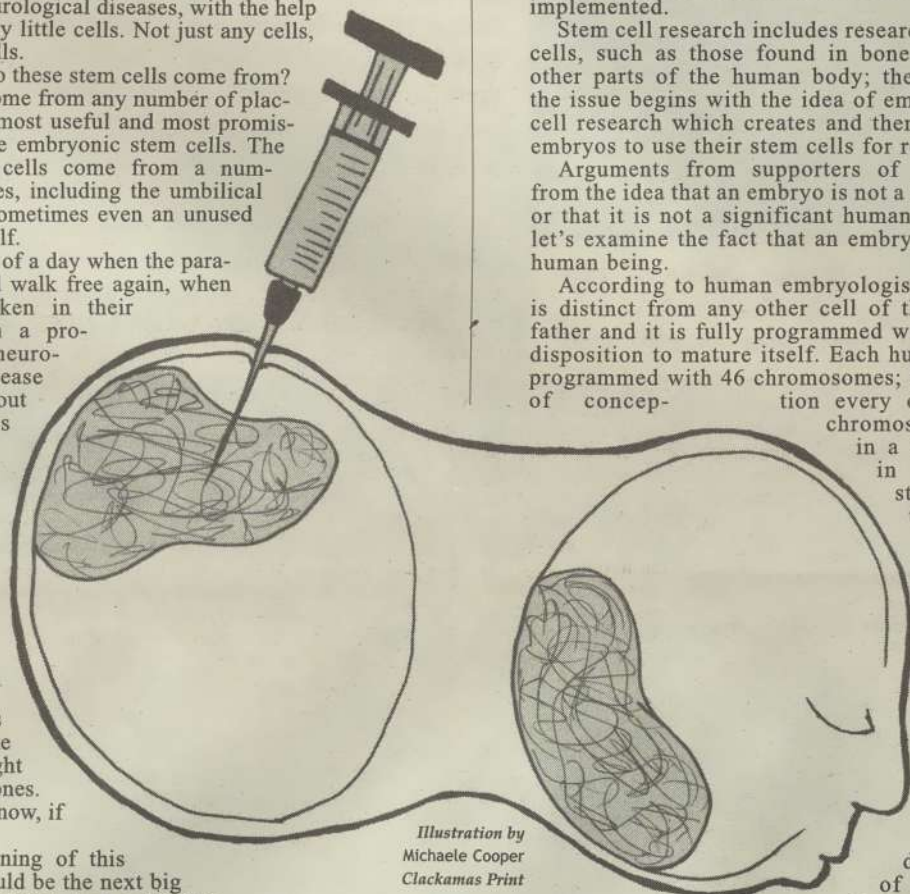


Illustration by
Michael Cooper
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Student Poll

What do you think of embryonic stem cell research?



"It would help with curing disease, like Michael J. Fox has Parkinson's, but there is a moral dilemma."

Jon Thissell


"As long as it's used for the benefit of man, more power to it."

Kevin Ellingson


"It is important to continue research to help as many people as possible."

Bianca Miele


"It's good to save people, but you have to have to kill to do research, it's a bad idea."

Tabitha Pinkston


"It would be foolish not to use science in any way possible to improve our lives."

Gary Nelson

This week's poll compiled by Joanne Bergstrom and Norma Martinez.