

Science's Stem Cell Scam

BY Michael Fumento

Embryonic stem cells (ESCs) receive tremendous media attention, with oft-repeated claims that they have the potential to cure virtually every disease known. Yet there are spoilsports, self included, who point out that they have yet to even make it into a human clinical trial. This is even as alternatives—adult stem cells (ASCs) from numerous places in the body as well as umbilical cord blood and placenta—are curing diseases here and now and have been doing so for decades. And that makes ESC advocates very, very angry.

How many diseases ASCs can treat or cure is debatable, with one website claiming almost 80 for umbilical cord blood alone. Dr. David Prentice of the Family Research Council, using stricter standards of evidence, has constituted a list of 72 for all types of ASCs.

But now three ESC advocates have directly challenged Prentice's list. They've published a letter in Science magazine, released ahead of publication obviously to influence President Bush's promise to veto legislation that would open wide the federal funding spigot for ESC research. The letter claims ASC "treatments fully tested in all required phases of clinical trials and approved by the U.S Food and Drug Administration are available to treat only nine of the conditions" on his list.

Well! One answer to that is that it's nine more than can be claimed for ESCs. Further, there are 1,175 clinical trials for ASCs, including those no longer recruiting patients, with zero for ESCs. But a better response is that the letter authors come from the Kenneth Lay School for honesty, as do the editors at Science.

In the detailed attachment to their letter, the Science magazine writers aren't just at odds with Prentice but the medical community as a whole. For example, regarding sickle cell anemia, they claim "adult stem cell transplants from bone marrow or umbilical cord blood can provide some benefit to sickle cell patients" and "hold the potential to treat sickle cell anemia."

"Some benefit" and "potential"?

An article from the May 2006 issue of Current Opinion in Hematology notes that "there is presently no curative therapy" for sickle cell anemia other than allogeneic hematopoietic stem cell transplantation.

"Hematopoietic" means from marrow or blood; "allogeneic" means the cells are from another person. Seminars in Hematology (2004) states, "... curative allogeneic stem cell transplantation therapy" has "been developed for sickle cell anemia." Meanwhile, "... curative allogeneic stem cell transplantation therapy [has] been developed for" sickle cell anemia according to Current Opinions in Molecular Therapy (2003), while "hematopoietic stem cells for allogeneic transplantation" are "currently the only curative approach for sickle cell anemia" observes the journal Blood (2002). (All emphasis mine.)

What does everybody seem to know that the Science writers and Science editors don't?

Words like “could” and “potential” are trick phraseology used throughout the letter attachment for ASC curative therapies that have been used routinely for years. This appears to give them no advantage over ESC therapy, all of which boasts nothing but potential.

The writers are correct about FDA approval; but that’s a trick. Some ASC therapies are approved in other countries but not yet here. More importantly, stem cell therapy is not a drug and therefore the FDA doesn’t regulate it the same way. Some have been used successfully for decades with no one seeking or receiving federal approval.

For that matter, aspirin is a drug but by their standards it only has potential use for aches and pains since it never went through the clinical trial process and the FDA has never given it formal approval.

How can Science not know all this? Simple; it does. I’ve written repeatedly of how Science has made itself a propaganda sheet for ESC research, as well as other political causes. At the least, it should change its name to Pseudoscience. Sometimes it prints easily falsifiable studies, such as this, attacking the usefulness of ASCs. Other times it falsely promotes ESCs. That culminated in January when the journal was forced to retract two groundbreaking ESC studies that proved frauds.

The journal wants to flood unpromising ESC research with taxpayer dollars because private investors know just how very unpromising it is. Now yet again Science has showcased the scientific and moral bankruptcy of the entire ESC advocacy movement.

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