

Adult Stem Cell Successes Finally in the News

Editor's note. The following appeared on the blog of bioethicist Wesley Smith—www.wesleyjsmith.com. It is reprinted with permission.

This is how I see it: Generally speaking, people want treatments for terrible diseases and injuries. They also are queasy about embryonic stem cell research and disapprove of cloning for any reason. But the yearning for cures trumps most people's ethical concerns about ESCR [Embryonic Stem Cell Research], so long as they believe that scientists are using "leftover" IVF embryos that "are going to be destroyed anyway." If they are told clearly that SCNT [Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer] is cloning, they oppose it even for cures—which is why tens of millions in propaganda dollars are being spent annually to hide the ball that somatic cell nuclear transfer is indeed cloning—as was done with Amendment 2 [in Missouri]. Still, most folk would prefer that treatments and cures come from adult stem cells, and thus the shamans of scientism also downplay the potential for adult/umbilical cord blood stem cell therapies.

Big Biotech's political strategy requires a compliant media that will willingly parrot the party line. This permits the power of repetition to steadily seep the desired political message into the public's consciousness—even for those who don't follow the stem cell debate closely. So far, the American media has gone enthusiastically along.

The key to breaking this political pincer has been for adult/umbilical cord blood stem cells to advance so far that the media news blockade becomes untenable. There are early indications that this may be finally beginning to happen. In recent days, we have seen small stories on how scientists have spurred the growth of adult brain stem cells in mice offering hope for neurological diseases, how a patient's own adult stem cells might treat heart disease, how mouse bone marrow stem cells might help diabetes by morphing into insulin creating cells, and how stem cells found in amniotic fluid might help treat gestating fetuses with developmental defects.

This is just a trickle of what could be reported, and many of these articles are run overseas where ESCR is less controversial—pointing to the political nature of U.S. coverage. But, it's a start. Let's hope these ethical stem cell breakthroughs keep on coming to the point that even the New York Times will start reporting on the successes as a regular part of its news coverage.