

To the President of the United States and Members of the United States Congress:

We, the undersigned, urge you to support the decision to permit federally-funded biomedical scientists to conduct research with human "pluripotent" stem cells. This critical research can be advanced while simultaneously protecting the moral sensibilities of the American people.

Human pluripotent stem cells are not embryonic cells because they cannot become a human being nor can they undergo embryological development. It is likely, however, that further research will reveal how to induce these cells to form certain specialized cell types that can be used for the treatment of human disease. A large body of successful work with mouse pluripotent stem cells encourages us to believe that as we progress to studies with human stem cells we will learn how to induce these cells to become bone marrow for treatment of cancer and other hematopoietic diseases, pancreatic cells for alleviating diabetes, and neuronal cells for treating Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's and various forms of brain and spinal cord disorders. Treatments using these stem cells could be much more effective than existing therapies because they may be engineered to be less susceptible to rejection.

There are serious negative consequences of not allowing federally funded scientists to work with human pluripotent stem cells. The net effect will be to bar the majority of the Nation's most prominent researchers who are supported by the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation at universities and non-profit institutions throughout the country from engaging in this critical research. Excluding these investigators will close off scientific opportunities to those most qualified to make dramatic advances towards using stem cells for the treatment of disease. Moreover, the new scientific understanding that emerges would not flow into the public domain and may be restricted to the commercial sector. Permitting peer-reviewed federal funds to be used for this research, combined with public oversight of these activities, is our best assurance that research will be of the highest quality and performed with the greatest dignity and moral responsibility. We hope that the President and the Congress together will make the informed and courageous decision to guarantee that those scientists who are most prepared and qualified to conduct safe, ethical and invaluable stem cell research be enabled to do so.

Stem cell research has enormous potential for the effective treatment of human disease. There is, therefore, a moral imperative to pursue it. Those who seek to prevent medical advances using stem cells must be held accountable to those who suffer from horrible disease and their families, why such hope should be withheld.

Sincerely yours,