 Click to Print

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Guidelines on stem cell research offered

Group promotes worldwide practices

By Terri Somers
UNION-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

February 2, 2007

An international organization of stem cell scientists released guidelines yesterday that aim to dictate rigorous ethical standards for research on human embryonic stem cells.

The guidelines were compiled by a task force of renowned scientists, as well as ethicists and lawyers from 14 countries, to promote responsible, transparent and uniform practices worldwide, according to the group, known as the International Society for Stem Cell Research.

“Realizing that stem cell research is an international community, we have to be able to share cells and our scientific methods across borders with some confidence that we have been doing our work to some agreed-upon ethical standards,” said Larry Goldstein, an embryonic stem cell researcher at the University of California San Diego.

Goldstein is a member of the task force that worked for more than a year on the guidelines.

The Foundation For Taxpayer and Consumer Rights in Santa Monica praised provisions in guidelines that emphasize the need for researchers “to promote public benefit as their primary objective” when turning over discoveries to commercial firms.

The guidelines also say “scientists and clinicians must be transparent and truthful about issues relating to human stem cell research and its potential to advance medicine.” And they urge scientists “to guard against the creation of unrealistic expectations of success.”

“Too often stem cell advocates have hyped the immediate benefit of stem cell research,” said John Simpson, of the foundation. “I’m delighted to see the call for realism.”

But the guidelines had their critics, especially from contingencies that oppose human embryonic stem cell research because it destroys embryos.

“This is worthless as an ethical guide because it is issued by scientists and entrepreneurs who have dedicated their careers to destructive human cloning and human embryo research and who will profit from the expansion of these abuses,” said Richard Doerflinger, an official with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

In the United States, the National Academy of Science has issued guidelines for controversial human embryonic stem cell research. Those guidelines are very U.S. centric because they reflect restrictions on federal funding used for human embryonic stem cell research.

The international standards reflect the same spirit as those issued in the United States, Goldstein said. But the international rules do not get as specific, allowing room for different government policies, legal systems and cultures to dictate how the guidelines will be met, he said.

For instance, U.S. standards require some kind of independent committee composed of ethicists and scientists to review all proposals for research involving human embryonic stem cells.

The international standards call for independent review but do not dictate specifically how that should be done


because many countries already have established their protocols, Goldstein said.

“The good thing about international agreements and standards is that they set the bar for people to perform reasonably and to prevent people from hiding behind an excuse like 'I live in a different country, with different standards,' ” he said.

■Reuters contributed to this report.

Find this article at:

<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/business/biotech/20070202-9999-1b2stems.html>

 [Click to Print](#)

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.