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New stem cell guidelines

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A group hoping to bridge the divide over stem cell research has come up with a new set of guidelines. One hitch: They're illegal in some states. Janet Babin reports.

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TEXT OF STORY

MARK AUSTIN THOMAS: Embryonic stem cells wow researchers because they can turn into virtually any cell in the body, but some believe using ES cells in the lab is morally wrong because the embryos end up destroyed. Now a new set of guidelines could help scientists police themselves. Janet Babin reports from the Marketplace Innovations Desk at North Carolina Public Radio.

JANET BABIN: To embryonic stem cell researchers, the world can be a patchwork quilt of regulations.

The International Society for Stem Cell Research is out with new guidelines it hopes will transcend borders. They call for rigorous ethical standards, but allow for so-called research cloning. That's when a patient's cells are copied so their disease can be studied in a petri dish.

But in some places, like Michigan, the new guidelines would be illegal.

Dr. George Daley chaired the guidelines task force. He hopes states will try to align any new regulations with the society's rules.

DR. GEORGE DALEY: Stem cell science has the potential to revolutionize medicine, and our country should get comfortable with this. The guidelines, we hope, will help us all get there.

Daley, who works at Children's Hospital Boston, says the U.S. is falling behind in ES cell research because state and federal restrictions are steering jobs abroad.

I'm Janet Babin for Marketplace.

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