

CALIFORNIA RIGHT TO LIFE EDUCATION FUND

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Stem Cell Therapy to Slow Down Liver Damage

Scientists have developed a new way to treat liver failure by dampening the immune response using stem cells taken from the bone marrow. So far the technique has only been tested in animals, but if it works in humans it could help save lives.

Potentially a patient could be kept alive longer until a donor organ is found - and the liver would be given the maximum chance to repair itself.

The Massachusetts General Hospital work is featured in the journal PLOS One.

The liver is one of the few major organs that is able to regenerate itself. However, the organ cannot cope with the extensive damage inflicted by diseases like chronic hepatitis or excessive long-term alcohol consumption.

At present, the only treatment for severe "end-stage" damage is a transplant - but donor organs are limited, and recipients must rely on powerful drugs to suppress their immune response.

Key cells

External liver assist devices have successfully supported some patients, but such machines require a supply of preferably human liver cells, which have been difficult to acquire.

The US researchers used mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs) - cells from the bone marrow that develop into tissues supporting blood cell development in the marrow cavity.

Previous research has shown that MSCs are able to inhibit several immune system activities, apparently by preventing the movement of immune cells to areas of damage.

A supply of MSCs can be extracted from a patient's own marrow and expanded to levels that could be therapeutically useful.

The researchers tested several ways of using the cells to treat rats with liver failure. Simply transplanting MSCs into the animals' livers was not effective.

However, two methods of delivering molecules secreted by the cells lessened inflammation within the liver and halted cell death.

Cycling the blood of rats with liver failure through an external bioreactor containing

MSCs also greatly reduced signs of liver failure in the animals, and boosted survival rates from 14% to 71%.

Researcher Biju Parekkadan said in theory a patient could be injected with a drug containing MSC-derived molecules to try to halt cell damage, and allow the organ to regenerate.

If that was not successful, or the damage was too extensive, then a device similar to the bioreactor could be considered to buy extra time before a transplant.

The British Liver Trust warned the research was still at an early stage.

But Professor Mark Thursz, of St Mary's Hospital, London and spokesperson for the trust, said: "A long standing goal in hepatology is the suppression of liver cell death until regeneration could occur.

"This development could potentially reduce the number of donor organs used in urgent transplant procedures thereby increasing the number available for the growing number of patients on routine waiting lists."

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/7012371.stm>

Stem cells trial for MS patients

A new treatment for multiple sclerosis (MS) is being pioneered near Bristol.

Six patients at Frenchay Hospital are being injected with their own stem cells in the hope that they will repair damage to the brain.

Prof Neil Scolding, of the Institute of Clinical Neurosciences, said: "We know stem cells are attracted into the brain, into these areas of damage."

He added that he hoped the stem cells would "help those areas to stop getting worse" and "repair damage."

'Lot of hope'

Liz Allison, an MS patient taking part in the trial, said: "I'm hoping there will be some improvement."

BBC health correspondent Matthew Hill said: "We've already seen stem cells used on cardiac patients but this is the first time a reputable organization has tried it out on MS patients.

"There is a lot of hope riding on these trials but it is very early days yet."

He added that it was likely to be several months before any conclusions could be drawn regarding the treatment.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/bristol/7014813.stm>

What's Wrong with In-Vitro Fertilization?

Science and technology continue to make enormous contributions to our lives; however the fact that a certain procedure is technologically possible does not make it ethically right. "In vitro" fertilization is one of these technologically possible, yet morally unacceptable procedures.

First, let us define terms - "in-vitro" fertilization literally means "in the glass." Human life is literally created in a petri dish in a laboratory environment.

The process begins by administering hormone treatments to hyper-stimulate the woman's ovaries to produce a number of mature eggs at the same time. The eggs are then collected from the woman's body and combined with sperm in a petri dish.

The resulting embryos are nourished in laboratory cultures in the petri dish and a few days later inserted into the woman's uterus with the hope that one embryo will successfully implant in the lining of the womb and develop into a full term pregnancy. The process is very controlled and involves numerous trips to the in vitro fertilization location.

So what's wrong with this procedure? With so many infertile couples wanting children, and this technology making it possible, what is the issue?

The Jones Institute, one of the pioneers of in vitro fertilization, reports that only 10 to 20% of the human embryos produced through in vitro fertilization ever result in a normal pregnancy. The Centers for Disease Control estimated that in 1998, 28,000 babies were born through in vitro fertilization in the United States. This means that 140,000 - 280,000 human embryos are missing from the equation for that year alone.

Many embryos die in the transfer process since they are fragile. Some embryos are unwanted and eliminated because they are considered genetically inadequate. Some embryos are stored alive in freezers. Some embryos are simply considered laboratory waste and are killed as they are washed down the sink.

The fact that life begins at fertilization is no longer disputed in the scientific community; and it matters not whether life begins through normal conjugal relations or in a petri dish. At the moment of fertilization, the human embryo has the complete genetic code and his or her growth and development is totally coordinated from within. As we tell the teenagers who come to our mall tables, there is no difference between the newly fertilized blastocyst and the full grown adult except SLED: size, location (womb or born) environment, and development level.

"Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of fertilization. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person."

When this fundamental moral line is violated or obscured, categories of people become devalued and become easily used for utilitarian purposes. (Recall Nazi Germany.)

Let us return to the infertile couple. You will often hear the claim that in-vitro fertilization allows an infertile couple the “right” to have a child. However no one has the “right” to a child. Even for the most loving of couples, there is no right to a child through either normal conjugal relations or reproductive technologies. In vitro fertilization turns children into commodities.

When a couple undergoes in vitro fertilization, they are saying, "We want a child no matter what," and the child becomes an object. This evolves into a selective mentality, whereby couples choose the kind of child they want. Above all, a child is a gift. Cooperating with God's plan for human procreation ensures that all children are accepted as gifts.

There are natural techniques which can help couples better understand the cycle of fertility and the optimum time for conception. The Pope Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction has been on the forefront of helping couples and families within God's design. (For further information see <http://www.naprotechnology.com/infertility.htm>)

A “Red Herring” often presented is the issue of children conceived through in vitro fertilization. Do they have less dignity? God allows children to be conceived through in vitro fertilization because He respects human freedom. But this does not mean that in vitro fertilization children have any less God-given dignity. Every child is made in the image of God and deserves to be protected and loved.

However, this does not mean we can condone in vitro fertilization. A similar conundrum is the child born outside of marriage. Because it can be done doesn't mean we should promote the practice.

For further information on the morality of fertility technology see:

Donum Vitae (Gift of Life) by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith

Humanae Vitae (Of Human Life) by Pope Paul VI

Familiaris Consortio (The Family in the Modern World) by Pope John Paul II

All are available on the Vatican website www.vatican.va.

LIFE CHAIN 2007

On Sunday October 7, thousands upon thousands of pro-life folks in hundreds of communities, lined streets across America standing silently holding signs proclaiming messages like “Abortion Kills Children” and “Abortion Hurts Women.” The event was the annual Life Chain. Above, a group from Antioch, CA gathered under beautiful blue skies and a gentle breeze. If you have never participated in a Life Chain, mark your calendars now for the first Sunday in October 2008 and plan to join us.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

(For the latest information, see www.calendarforlife.org)

Hispanic Pro-Life Conference

November 25

St. Mary Cathedral, San Francisco. For further details e-mail our office at callife@calright2life.org and we will forward additional information as it becomes available

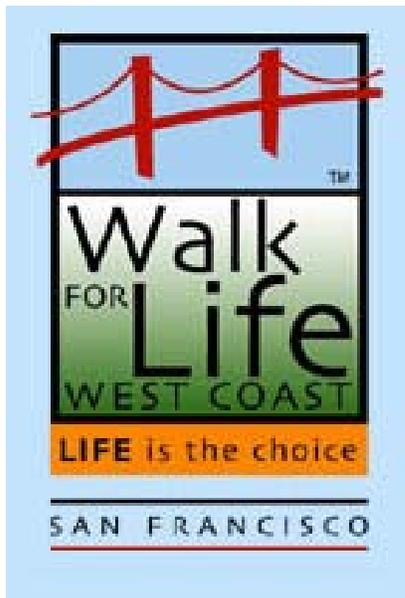
National Conference on Men and Abortion

November 28-29

Sponsored by Vicki Thorn's National Organization of Post-Abortion Reconciliation & Healing (NOPARH). This 2-day conference will be held at St. Mary Cathedral. For further information, visit www.menandabortion.info or contact Vicki Thorn 414-483-4141.

4th Annual Walk for Life West Coast

January 19, 2008



Speakers begin at Justin Herman Plaza at 11 a.m. followed by the Walk starting at noon. Plan to join us for the biggest pro-life event on the West Coast! Over 20,000 people participated in last year's walk, and an even bigger crowd is expected in 2008. Meet at Justin Herman Plaza at the Embarcadero, dress warmly, wear comfortable shoes, and bring a bag lunch. For further info, please visit: www.walkforlifewc.com.

