

CALIFORNIA RIGHT TO LIFE EDUCATION FUND

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A Decade Later: Time for a Dose of Reality on Stem Cells

By Richard Doerflinger

In 1998, Dr. James Thomson of the University of Wisconsin first isolated human embryonic stem cells (ESCs). These early, unspecialized cells were hailed as a way to create all cell types of the human body at will, a Holy Grail for curing diseases. Moral qualms about killing embryos for the cells were swept away in this wave of enthusiasm. In a few years, it was said, life-saving medical advances would show that such objections should be ignored.

A decade later, it is time for a reality check. ESCs have been involved in some interesting experiments, but are not close to producing cures. This is not due to limited federal funding—it is equally true in countries with no such limits, and in states pouring their own public funds into the research. ESCs in fact are unpredictable, difficult to control, and prone to causing tumors in animals. Experts now admit that human treatments using them may not emerge for decades, if ever.

The bishops' statement *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* urges Catholics to become informed on important moral issues in public life, including this issue of destroying embryos for stem cell research.

One fact is that treatments are emerging from stem cell research. But these use stem cells (once seen as less versatile) found in adult tissues and in umbilical cord blood from live births. In human trials, these cells have repaired heart damage, restored vision, and helped reverse autoimmune diseases like multiple sclerosis and juvenile diabetes, as well as some cancers. A search on "stem cell" on the federal site www.clinicaltrials.gov shows over 2,000 clinical trials using these cells, half of them still recruiting patients.

Last November an additional breakthrough transformed the stem cell debate. Scientists in Japan

and in Wisconsin—the latter team led by the same James Thomson who first isolated human ESCs—learned how to "reprogram" ordinary adult cells into cells with the properties of ESCs, without producing or destroying a human embryo. These "induced pluripotent stem cells" (iPS cells) have already been used to reverse disease in animals. Dr. Thomson says this is "the beginning of the end" of the ethical debate, as fewer and fewer laboratories will see any need to kill embryos for stem cells.

Americans are pragmatic. We find it hard to focus on an ethical principle when medical benefits are placed on the other side of the scale. But the noise about the benefits of ESCs may now die down enough to let us hear that message about ethics again.

Though at a very early stage of development, the human embryo is one of us – a living individual of the human species, with the innate potential to grow into a mature human being if given nourishment and protection. Here, as in all human

research, we must never harm or kill an innocent, unconsenting human being solely for alleged benefit to others. Crossing that moral line leaves more ethical abuses in its wake.

This has proved true. The problem of tissue rejection has led researchers to

support cloning human embryos, to obtain cells that genetically match individual patients. This means mass producing human lives in the laboratory solely to destroy them. Researchers have hired women to take fertility drugs to produce many eggs at once for cloning attempts, risking the women's health. Some propose using animal eggs instead, to produce bizarre human/animal hybrid embryos for stem cell research. Some, to address ESCs' tendency to form tumors, have proposed gestating cloned embryos in the womb to a stage where more

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usable cells may be obtained – the grotesque practice of “fetus farming” that Congress has prohibited.

Most Americans abhor the idea of cloning human embryos for research, as well as these other abuses. Polls show they are ambivalent on the ESC question generally. In a survey published in the Spring 2008 issue of *The New Atlantis*, 69 percent of respondents said they support “stem cell research.” But 51 percent agreed that it is unethical to destroy human embryos for such research, notwithstanding the hope of curing disease. When told about the new alternative of iPS cells, 61 percent said public funding should go to that avenue and not to research that destroys human embryos.

Americans want to be fair and humane. They do not seek out the most unethical way to pursue medical progress -- rather, they want science and ethics to move forward hand in hand. It is not too much to ask the same of our researchers and policy makers.

Richard Doerflinger is associate director of the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *He holds a master of arts in divinity degree from the University of Chicago and has pursued doctoral studies at the University of Chicago and The Catholic University of America. He is an adjunct fellow in bioethics and public policy at the National Catholic Bioethics Center. He frequently writes and speaks on euthanasia, assisted suicide, embryo experimentation and reproductive technologies.*

40-Days-for-Life

We asked our members to share their stories of 40-Days-for-Life. following are excerpts of their stories.

NAPA, CA - By Ron Maxson

Just as the sun was beginning to warm the half-dozen or so vigil members praying in front of Napa Planned Parenthood Cecelia arrived. The day before she heard that Napa counselors were so busy that they had completely exhausted their supply of a vital pamphlet used to help change the hearts of women entering the clinic. Typical of her dedication to rescuing the innocent and her commitment to enabling others to do the same, Cecelia simply rearranged her full schedule

for the day, jumped in her car and brought the supplies requiring over an hour's drive. She then joined the praying volunteers for three hours of intense prayer on the sidewalk for an end to abortion. Napa pro-lifers really appreciate the many ways that California Right to Life helps them save lives.



Delighted members of the Napa 40 Days For Life Campaign welcome Cecelia Cody, Administrative Director of the California Right to Life Education Fund, to their 24 hour a day, 40 day, prayer vigil in front of the Napa Planned Parenthood facility in Napa, CA.

Homebound in the Central Valley - I was lamenting the fact that I would be unable to join any of the vigil sites, due to my advanced age and lack of mobility. I contacted your office and the young lady offered me several prayer options – however they required access to the internet, and I don't have a computer. Then she got all excited and told me that the National 40-Days-for-Life project had just posted a 40-Days of

Prayer, and she would print it off and send it to me in the next few days.

www.PrayForLifeDay.com

A group of us have been praying the prayer each day, as part of our breakfast ritual here at the assisted living home. Thank you so much for finding a way we could participate in your 40-Days-for-Life. May God bless your efforts for our preborn brothers and sisters.

Remember Komen Foundation Donates to Planned Parenthood

Millions of Americans continue to be duped into thinking all of their donations to the Komen Foundation go to cure breast cancer. However some of the monies are given to Planned Parenthood, a leading pro-abortion activist group. The Komen Foundation, as a result of donations received from the Race for the Cure, donates a considerable amount of the money they raise to Planned Parenthood; there has long been a tight relationship between Komen and Planned Parenthood."

THANK YOU DONORS

As we pause in this month of Thanksgiving – a big “THANK YOU” to all our donors, especially our monthly donors, and those special people who came to our rescue in the past month. Your contributions make the distribution of this newsletter a reality (at a cost of \$300 per month) and allow us to be there for phone counseling for women considering abortion and families considering end of life issues (phone bill \$70 a month), and to assist students doing research projects relating to life.

We would also like to make honorable mention this month a few of the many people who donate their time and resources which allow us to keep our actual expenses to a minimum. One family donates all the expenses of maintaining a website including domain name registration, and uploading our newsletters etc. The website is how student find us when they do a “Google” search.

The wonderful lady who prints our newsletter donates all her “set-up time” making sure the pictures and text are as crisp and clear as possible; she only charges us for the cost of printing.

Finally, a thank you to our board members who guide the direction of our efforts, keeping us “on task” and allocating donations where they will be best bear fruit to proclaim the Culture of Life; protecting life from fertilization to natural death.

Donation Update – Credit Cards Accepted

We now have an option for credit card donations through the Local Independent Charities website. (www.lic.org) If you are interested in considering this method of donating, please contact our office for further information and instructions.

United Way/Combined Federal Campaign etc.
The annual United Way/Combined Federal Campaign and other workplace payroll deduction

During the last fiscal year chapters of the Komen Race for the Cure breast cancer group gave \$711,485 from April 1, 2005 to March 31, 2006 to Planned Parenthood affiliates. The amount of the grants from Komen affiliates to Planned Parenthood appears to be on the rise and 25 Komen affiliates now have a partnership with the abortion business.

Komen officials have dismissed the grants saying they are for breast cancer screenings, but pro-life advocates say the money is fungible and that it frees up funds Planned Parenthood could use for breast screenings but instead uses on abortions.

The opposition to Komen goes beyond the donations and extends to the fact the breast cancer group denies the research showing women who have abortions increase their chance of contracting breast cancer by 40 percent.

The Komen Foundation, despite all scientific evidence indicating a link between abortion and breast cancer, refuses to acknowledge any such link.

Related web sites:

Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation -

<http://www.komen.org>

National Coalition on Abortion/Breast Cancer -

<http://www.abortionbreastcancer.com>

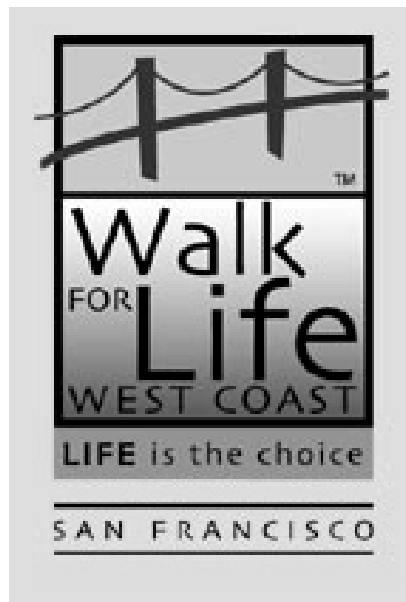
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

5th Annual Walk for Life West Coast January 24, 2009

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 25,000 people participated in last year's walk, and an even bigger crowd is expected in 2009. Meet at Justin Herman Plaza at the Embarcadero, dress warmly, wear comfortable shoes, and bring a bag lunch. For further info, visit:

www.walkforlifewc.com.



United Way/Combined Federal Campaign etc.
The annual United Way/Combined Federal Campaign and other workplace payroll deduction

charity drives continue. Donating through payroll deduction is a great way to support our efforts. **Our CFC number (for federal employees) is 49743.** If you have any questions, call us at 925-944-5351, and we assist you in designating your payroll deduction to California Right to Life Education Fund.

We continue to support various local outreach groups with materials for information tables at shopping malls, county fairs and church ministry fairs. Your support allows us to continue to provide our dedicated volunteers with the vital pro-life materials; they are your presence in the world, proclaiming the preciousness of every life. Last month alone we gave out almost \$500 worth of materials.

All donations to Ca. Right to Life EDUCATION FUND are tax deductible.

WHO IS CALIFORNIA RIGHT TO LIFE?

This is the newsletter of **California Right to Life Education Fund**, a 501-c-3 organization established to educate the public about pro-life issues. Donations to the EDUCATION FUND are **tax-deductible** and can be sent to P.O. Box 4343, Walnut Creek, CA 94596-0343.

California Right to Life **Committee, Inc.** is a 501-c-4 organization providing information on legislative issues affecting the right to life, and pro-life political advocacy. **CRLC, Inc. is not permitted**, under IRS regulations, to offer a tax deduction for donations. \$24.99 annually is requested for a subscription to the CRLC legislative email updates list and can be sent to 1920 Monument Blvd #309, Concord, CA 94520.

Both are affiliates of American Life League, headed by Judie Brown, and share the same “no-exceptions, no excuses” beliefs and the same dedication to promoting the Culture of Life, respecting all innocent human life from the single-cell stage to natural death.