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Prop 2 offers hope for future medical breakthroughs

For many voters, one of the most difficult decisions on Nov. 4, whether on the local, state or national level, concerns Proposal 2, the use of embryos for medical research.

The difficulty rests in the fact that the good the proposal could bring is offset, at least in the minds of many people, by a moral conflict.

In the end, each individual will have to decide how to resolve that dilemma.

First, some facts. Michigan currently is only one of five states that restricts this research. Proponents admit embryonic stem-cell research is allowed in Michigan but scientists have to get the stem cells from other states, which they say is often difficult.

Rick Johnson, chief financial officer of Fraser Consulting, in Detroit, and a member of CureMichigan, the group that is supporting Proposal 2, said the plan will not involve any additional public tax dollars, contrary to many misleading advertisements. The research will be conducted through federal grants and private funds.

Also, the embryos used in the research would be those currently created in fertility clinics and then later discarded. The proposal would allow the use only of embryos that otherwise would be destroyed. It would be illegal to produce embryos for sale.

Jack Mosher, assistant researcher from the University of Michigan, said researchers want to study both embryonic stem cells and adult stem cells to increase the chances of finding cures for diseases.

"It's not that embryonic research is better; it's just another tool in the arsenal," he said. "It's the best hope for cures for previously incurable diseases."

The issue presents a moral dilemma to many people who believe life starts with conception.

By defeating the proposal, they are not really saving a life because the embryos will be destroyed anyway.

However, defeat of the proposal could be sacrificing the lives of countless people in the future who would benefit from any research breakthroughs.

We don't envy anyone who is searching their conscience to figure out what is right in this case and we urge people, when all is said and done, to vote their consciences because they have to live with their decision.

For some, it may come down to a choice between principle and practicality. The principle is that an embryo is being destroyed that could eventually become a human being.

The practical is knowing this embryo never will be allowed to grow, yet it could save many lives in the future.

The proposal prompts the question that if this is a life issue, why do we allow the embryos to be created and then destroyed?

At this point, it's a moot argument and we certainly are not advocating banning fertility clinics and invitro fertilization.

Proposal 2 doesn't go too far. There won't be unregulated research and there are no additional taxes.

In our opinion, since the embryos would be destroyed anyway, we'd prefer that they be used for what researches say "holds the promise for the greatest medical breakthroughs in research history."