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UofM pushes stem cell research forward

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To research stem cells or not to research stem cells. That has been a vexing question for Michigan (along with numerous other states). However, there is no question on whether or not to push forward that research in the minds of Robert and Marge Alpern.

The Bloomfield Hills couple has formed the Robert and Marge Alpern Stem Cell Research Fund at the University of Michigan through a significant gift to the school. The new fund will offer researchers university-wide resources for both embryonic and tissue-specific stem cell research in the university's Medical School and Center for Stem Cell Biology.

"Because we live in a democratic country with a long and proud history of openness and freedom, we wish to personally support the important research on stem cells in the face of the political restrictions placed on it by both the federal and state governments," the Alperns say.

Embryonic stem cell research has been a conundrum for officials in the state. Some say it is immoral because it uses stem cells from dead fetuses while the research holds the promise to treat a number of conditions and diseases. Many states, such as California, are pushing forward public funding for the rapidly growing field of research while Michigan has outlawed embryonic stem cell research. However, the state is considering overturning the ban.

The Alperns and UofM officials hope the fund acts as a catalyst for more donations to further research at the university.

"This gift that creates the Alpern Fund provides a beacon of hope for millions of individuals who suffer from devastating diseases that might be eliminated by novel treatments that we believe will emerge from stem cell research," says James Douglas Engel, a professor of Developmental Biology at the UofM Medical School and chair of the Department of Cell and Developmental Biology.

A stem cell research committee will review projects proposed by university researchers each year and select only the most meritorious to receive resources from the fund.

The Alperns, both 1942 graduates of the UofM, have previously made other large gifts to the university for complementary and integrative medicine and the Matthaei Botanical Gardens.

To learn more about making a gift to the fund can click [here](#) and select "Alpern Stem Cell Research Fund," or contact Anne Cooper at annea@umich.edu or at (734) 998 7707.