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MCSCRC Comments on Recent Embryonic Stem Cell Research Advancements

SOUTHFIELD, Mich. — The following statement can be attributed to Marcia Baum, Executive Director of Michigan Citizens for Stem Cell Research & Cures (MCSCRC). Baum is commenting on two recent advancements in embryonic stem cell research; reports that researchers cloned a monkey embryo and extracted stem cells from it, and a recent announcement that scientists were apparently able to derive embryonic stem cell-like cells from a human skin cell.

“These reported advancements in embryonic stem cell research are encouraging and are sure to be thoroughly reviewed by others in the scientific community. They point out the extraordinary research that is going on in other states. This research came from labs in Wisconsin and California, states that encourage embryonic stem cell research. It’s unfortunate Michigan is missing out on much of this activity because our state’s embryonic stem cell research laws are among the most restrictive in the nation.”

The science community is cautioning that more work must be done with these de-differentiated cells to determine how stable they are and whether they really are functionally equivalent to embryonic stem cells. Most importantly, the use of viruses to transport the reprogramming genes into the adult human cells causes mutations that predispose these cells to cancer. This technical problem will have to be solved before the de-differentiated cells can be used clinically. There are also signs that these cells would be unacceptable for creating transplant tissue that in theory could be used to treat diseases like diabetes, Parkinson's, and spinal cord injury.

“We need to pursue all forms of research and put Michigan into the forefront of breakthroughs by bringing our state’s laws in line with those in the leading states and countries.”

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