

RESOURCE ROUNDUP

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The Hippocratic Resource

(A Statewide Organization of Louisiana Physicians, Dentists, Nurses, Therapists and Other Health Professionals)

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"I will give no deadly medicine to anyone if asked ... I will not give to a woman an instrument to produce an abortion"

Dear Colleague:

The accompanying flyer, constituting a "second notice" of the *Hippocratic Resource's* 4th "Gathering" (this time in a So. Louisiana Seafood Boil format), reflects probably the most immediately important "issue" on our horizon! The date, place and time were chosen to take into consideration that there are football fans among us, some of whom might be traveling across the state to attend the LSU-Florida football game – whose kickoff later the same day is at 7 p.m. Hopefully, this could make it easier to join in the fun of the "Gathering," and we promise a true minimum of "business" (although, in anticipation of applying for 501(c)(3) tax status as a non-profit, we must formally approve officers, and make a few appropriate decisions). We look forward to seeing you here!

Additionally in this issue, we wish to wrap up our 2007 Legislature's accomplishments; to bring up a couple of other matters of Hippocratic interest; and to summarize scientific happenings in the human *embryonic/adult stem-cell and cloning* research areas. The latter will doubtless be a principal component of our efforts in the 2008 Legislature, particularly as it will be an "open" session, with both fiscal and non-fiscal issues legislated. In that connection, due to term-limits, many life-friendly legislators will not be returning to their former seats, and we must individually take whatever steps we can to help ensure a "life-friendly" Louisiana Legislature for the next dozen or so years. Again, we look forward to seeing you here on Saturday, October 6th!

W. "Al" Krotoski, M.D., etc., and Francis Rinaudo, Jr., D.D.S.

2007 Legislature Wrap-up

Of the ten bills *The Hippocratic Resource* was following during the 2007 session, one was withdrawn; two failed at the committee level; one passed in the Senate, but failed in a House committee; and seven passed both chambers, and were sent to the Governor for signature. Of the last group, Gov. Blanco signed six, and vetoed one. The signed bills included: **HB 25**, *mandating fetal pain and obstetrical ultrasound information for prospective abortees*; **HB 614/SB 161**, *criminalizing partial-birth abortion*; **HB 178**, *strengthening protections for the pre-nate (unborn child) in cases of prenatal drug/alcohol abuse*; **HB 251**, *enhancing respiratory therapists' autonomy and responsibility*; and **HB 602**, *changing the method of health care recording and reporting, with the formation of a "Health Care Advisory Panel."* *The veto* was exercised for a part of **HB 1**, the Appropriations Bill, and *denied \$500,000 of funding to the Governor's*

Program on Abstinence (GPA), should no federal funding be forthcoming. The actual texts of the signed measures can be found at the Legislature's website at www.legis.state.la.us, by scrolling down to "Bill Search" and clicking on the bill No.

Legislature Transformation

Due to "term limit" legislation passed a couple of years ago, approximately 50 of 105 Louisiana House members, and 15 of 39 Senators will not be returning to their former seats for the next Legislative Session. Of these, 34 Representatives and 7 Senators, who have been particularly faithful to life-respecting votes on issues dealing with abortion, will be missing, and must be replaced by newly elected legislators. We are losing Senators Cain, Ellington, Lentini, Malone, Romero, Smith and Theunissen, as well as Representatives Alario,

(continued on next page)

Roster Changes: (Information removed per member privacy assurance).

Legislature Transformation (cont.)

Alexander, Baudoin, Beard (www.garybeard.org), Bowler, Crane, Crowe (www.agcroweforsenate.com), Durand, Faucheux, Frith, Elcie Guillory, Hebert, Johns, Kennard, Kenney, LaFleur, Lancaster, Martiny, McDonald, Morrish, Odinet, Pinac, Powell, Romero, Scalise, Schneider, Smith, Strain (www.mikestrain.org), Thompson, Toomy, Townsend, Triche and Walsworth, among others. *To say that it is crucial that those leaving be replaced by life-respecting individuals, is a huge understatement!* Please become aware of the voting records (if any) [www.legis.state.la.us or www.brownpelicanla.com] of potential replacements or, at least, of their philosophies, and vote accordingly. We *must* maintain what is a phenomenon rather unique to Louisiana, i.e. a largely bi-partisan respect for life that nourishes, protects and enhances our vocations and practices as genuine health professionals faithful to the Hippocratic Oath!

National Legislation Notes

H.R. 3043, the Health and Human Services Appropriation, passed the U.S. House on July 19, and now goes to the Senate as **S. 1710**. Two amendments are notable:

Amendment 523 (Rep. Chris Smith, R-NJ) increased appropriations for the National Cord Blood Stem Cell Program by \$11,037,000. This was **accepted**.

Amendment 594 (Rep. Mike Pence, R-IN) would have prohibited use of funds in the bill for Planned Parenthood, but was **rejected, 189-231**. Louisiana congressmen voting *for* the amendment were: Alexander, Baker, Boustany, McCrery, Melancon (Jindal absent). *Against*: Jefferson.

H.R. 3442, “to ensure that women seeking an abortion are fully informed regarding the pain experienced by their unborn child,” has been re-introduced by Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ), with 106 co-sponsors, as the new House counterpart of **S. 356** (Sen. Sam Brownback, R-KS). Both face an uphill fight in the Democrat-controlled 110th Congress.

H.R. 1964 and S. 1173, the so-called “Freedom of Choice Act” (FOCA), was introduced “To protect, consistent with *Roe v. Wade*, a woman's freedom to

choose to bear a child or terminate a pregnancy, and for other purposes,” i.e. to invalidate all limits on abortion by barring government – at any level – from interfering with “a woman’s fundamental right [sic] to ... terminate a pregnancy.” They are now in the Judiciary Committee of each chamber. **Please FAX Senators Vitter [(202) 228-061] and Landrieu [(202) 224-9735] to request that they strongly oppose this bill!**

Other Briefs (www.LifeNews.com)

“4D” Obstetrical Ultrasound, a technological marvel that allows women to see their (moving) unborn child in real time, with astonishing detail and clarity, is having an impact on those contemplating abortion. “The promotion of ultrasound legislation — often called ‘window to the womb’ laws [such as Rep. A.G. Crowe’s passed/signed HB 25] ... offer[s] women a more complete picture of what abortion is, and [assists them] to use the power of conscience to change hearts and minds,” according to former presidential candidate, Gary Bauer.

RU-486 (mifepristone) purported “safety” was recently touted, but the Chinese-made abortion pill is now the killer of 8-10% of aborted children, with sometimes serious risks for women, according to Dr. D. Harrison, of the American Association of Pro-life Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

Jack Kevorkian (“Dr. Death”) reportedly has a speaking engagement at the University of Florida that could net him \$50,000 of *university* money – *if* his parole officer grants him special permission. Kevorkian served 8 years of a 10-25 year prison sentence for deliberately killing a disabled patient.

Amnesty International’s support of abortion for victims of sexual abuse in war-torn areas “strikes against the U.N.’s Declaration on the Rights of the Child ... before and after birth,” and has resulted in widespread resignations from, and loss of support for A.I.

Harvard Medical School-affiliated Boston hospitals support direct killing of children *in utero* for late-term abortions, in clear opposition to the Hippocratic Oath (news@lifeissues.org).

Thanks to the extreme generosity of two private donors, we have had sufficient funds to purchase and again display the billboard illustrated below, first on I-20 in Bossier City during June/July, then, in October, on I-10 near Iowa, LA:



HUMAN CLONING and EMBRYONIC STEM CELL RESEARCH

An Update on Science, *not* Politics!

Part 1. (August 2007)

Despite all the heavily touted promises of both human cloning and *embryonic* stem cell research for human medicine over the last decade, relatively little has come to pass thus far. Certainly, there have yet been no protocols developed for clinical medicine using *embryonic* stem cells, whereas the complexities of the almost miraculous process of bigametal reproduction, as well as possible complications of stem cell use, are becoming more apparent.

Human Cloning

Aside from the somehow prideful satisfaction of scientific curiosity that would result from successful cloning of a human embryo – and hence, of the *possibility* of being able to place him or her on the road to maturation, or of determining the outcome of mixing human with non-human species (which has already been attempted with rabbit, pig, and cow!) – the two principal “practical” reasons for indulging in this type of research are (1) the production of a source of *theoretically* totipotent embryonic stem cells, and (2) obtaining funding for a laboratory – and/or staff – to do so. In regard to both of these, a great deal of effort is being put forth by a small number of laboratories worldwide, employing scientists who choose to pursue this unholy grail of the-human-species-as-experimental-subject, and are willing to face down the serious ethical disapprobation by many of their peers. Given the popular enthusiasm and the media hype for the first of these reasons, the second often becomes quite attainable, regardless of any degree of experience and/or expertise in reproductive cytology and/or the micromanipulations necessary. In California, for example, and in response to the \$3 billion “Stem Cell Research and Cures Initiative” that the voters were persuaded to commit to this type of work in 2004, grants of up to a million dollars are being awarded through the “California Institute for Regenerative Medicine” (CIRM), from its \$45 million allocation, to scientists in totally unrelated scientific areas. One such, an engineer, was reported¹ to have said, “At Stanford, you’re parking your car next to some Nobel laureate who knows how to work with stem cells. We can get help.” Little wonder that the respect for life that most sincere biologists acquire as a result of their experiences is

absent – perhaps not even desired due to its ethical restraint – among many in this field!

The most notorious recent development in the human cloning area has again been linked to the Hwang Woo-suk scandal of three years ago, in which a scientist from S. Korea’s Seoul National University claimed to have attained successful human cloning to the blastocyst stage – by falsifying results. In April 2007, an article on the purportedly successful trans-generic cloning of a gray wolf (nuclear donor) with domestic dog (recipient enucleated oocyte), published from the same laboratory, came under serious scientific scrutiny, and was withdrawn.² Apparently, “if at first you don’t succeed, try, try again!”

On the other hand, other scientists are working ethically with non-human species, and are heavily involved in the slow, hard, and frustrating work of sorting through the real mysteries of early development and growth of mammals from their single cell beginnings. These folks clearly deserve commendation. Nevertheless, “familiarity breeds contempt,” and there is a dearth of respect for part of the miraculous stuff of life, the *oocyte* (*ovum*) or “egg [, which] is round and fairly simple in appearance but ... entrusted with executing the essential, remarkable events for starting a new life.”³ As an example, one can quote a descriptive comment found in the editorial of the June 2007 issue of *The Scientist*³ regarding the routine enucleation of (mouse) oocytes in preparation for experimentation as being like “chopping an onion for a prep cook,” despite the fact that “[t]he remarkable chemistry of the ooplasm contains necessary ingredients to, in a sense, turn back the genomic clock ...[of] an adult nucleus” during somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT) cloning.³ Constant vigilance is needed!

Semantic Manipulation

As the stakes of public acceptance of human cloning and *embryonic* stem cell research and their possible use are so high, the terminologies used in these processes are being changed. Thus, because of the lay public’s initial aversion to the concept of cloning a human being, a semantic dichotomy was created. Although the processes differ *only* in the length of time a human clone is allowed to live, “reproductive [human] cloning” came to mean cloning to produce a baby on his or her way to becoming an adult, whereas “therapeutic [human] cloning” is used – especially by the media – when the [human] clone embryo is destroyed before birth. (Therapeutic for whom??) Cloning that involves transfer of the nucleus from a mature (somatic) cell became “somatic cell nuclear transfer,” then just “SCNT,” *de rigueur*, to avoid the term, “cloning.” In instances where legislation was introduced to ban or control the process, battles were joined on *opposing* bills “to ban human cloning,” both describing exactly the same

* Sincere appreciation to E. J. Shannon, Ph.D., for providing most of the source material for this commentary

cloning technique, but differing in their intent regarding the length of life allowed the clone embryo. Similarly, the media – which, for some reason, favor the extraction of stem cells from human embryos over extraction from mature (adult) human tissues – have dropped the crucial distinguishing term, “*embryonic*” from their reports as much as possible, and simply refer to “stem cells” or “stem cell research” without any modifier, thus making it all seem the same, and morally/ethically equivalent. However, to quote experimental embryologists Keith Latham and Carmen Sapienza of the Fels Institute at Temple University, Philadelphia, this “distortion of simple, well-defined, broadly accepted, and widely understood terms such as “embryo” serves political, not scientific ends.³”

Embryonic Stem Cell Research

Not surprisingly, *embryonic* stem cell research (ESCR) involves the study/use of stem cells derived/extracted/harvested from (human) embryos – whether produced by cloning (SCNT) or fertilization *in vitro* (IVF), usually at the blastocyst (hollow ball) stage at 15 days of age, and possessing approximately 100 cells. In the process of “harvesting” the stem cells (ESCs), the embryo’s integrity is destroyed, thus killing him or her. This, of course, is the fundamental, inescapable, ethical problem with *embryonic* stem cell research, and will continue to be so. (It is why, in his 2001 Executive Order, President Bush denied taxpayer-derived funding for any ESCR involving the *new* destruction of human embryos). Once “harvested,” ESCs are induced to multiply independently in tissue culture, establishing ESC “lines” that can be so maintained for long time periods (years). Research involving ESC “lines” in existence in 2001 (71 lines) has been eligible for National Institutes of Health (NIH) government funding – and \$40-50 million is being granted annually for this work.

An alternative method for obtaining a “starter” *embryonic* stem cell for producing culture lines has been proposed, based on the concept that removal of a single stem cell from an early (8-cell) embryo – as is done perhaps 1,000 times annually in the U.S. to determine the genetic “health” of many embryos produced by IVF – apparently doesn’t prevent the “donor” embryo’s development into a baby and beyond. However, this “lack of harm” concept has been challenged recently,⁴ and further studies of the question are being planned.

There are also alternative methods proposed for producing ESCs from non-embryonic sources, whether by inducing parthenogenesis,⁵ or by reprogramming adult cells by critical gene insertion.⁶ Whether or not such methods would avoid long-standing ethical objections is still unresolved.

Embryonic stem cells, because of their “pluri-“ or “toti-”potency, are being looked to for the cure/melioration of many chronic diseases that are considered to be due to a lack or failure of certain defined cells/tissues or their products, such as diabetes or Parkinson’s disease or, more recently, macular degeneration of the eye,⁷ as well as the cure/melioration of the effects of trauma within non-regenerating tissue, e.g. stroke, spinal cord injury, etc. On a theoretical level, this seems to make sense; however, the awesome complexity of the human system, including its mechanisms to maintain integrity and physiologic balance, as well as an immune system that rejects foreign materials, make the probably attainable reality far less than the panacea they are touted to be. Furthermore, serious complications of direct *embryonic* stem cell use involve not only the possibility of immune rejection, but also of increased tumor potential. The latter should not be surprising, given that, by their very nature, ESCs have the incredible potential of producing every tissue and organ in the body *while in contact with, and influenced by similarly developing/growing cells and tissue*; when away from the controlling/modulating influences of their natural neighbors, anything could be possible, and some has already been seen.⁸ (*To be continued*)

W. A. Krotoski, M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H.

¹ *Nature.com*. Seed money to bring in pioneers. 14 March, 2007. <http://www.nature.com/news/2007/070312/full/446238a.html>

² *The Scientist*, Korean wolf cloning study pulled. 12 April, 2007. <http://www.the-scientist.com/news/home/53065>

³ Editorial: Cracking cloning. *The Scientist* (magazine) 21(6):35-39 (2007)

⁴ *Nature genetics*. Reproductive medicine: The first cut. 31 January, 2007. <http://www.nature.com/news/2007/070129/full/445479a.html>

⁵ *Nature clinical practice*. Activated eggs offer route to stem cells. 11 July, 2007.

<http://www.nature.com/news/2007/0707/09/full/448116a.html>

⁶ Chang, H.Y. and Cotsarelis, G. Turning skin into embryonic stem cells. *Nature medicine* 13(7):783-784 (2007)

⁷ *Yahoo News*. Scientists plan stem cell cure for blindness. 5 Jun, 2007. http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20070605/sc_nm/stemcells_blindness_dc

⁸ C.T. Carson *et al.* Stem cells: the good, bad and barely in control. *Nature Medicine* 12(11):1237-1238 (2006)