



National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society

Embryonic Stem Cell Lines Available for Federally Funded Research Position

Request

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society urges Congress to support the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2007 (H.R. 3 and S. 5) at all levels of the legislative process. This legislation would increase the number of approved embryonic stem cell lines that can be used in federally funded research by allowing new lines to be generated from embryos that have been donated for research purposes by people using the services of in vitro fertilization clinics, while establishing important ethical protections.

Request

The Society believes that all promising avenues of research that could lead to the cure or prevention of multiple sclerosis or relieve its symptoms must be explored. The Society supports the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act (H.R. 3 and S. 5) to expand the number of approved stem cell lines that are available for federally funded research.

The Society supports the conduct of scientifically meritorious medical research, including research using human cells, in accordance with federal, state, and local laws and with adherence to the strictest ethical and procedural guidelines. Research on all types of stem cells is critical because we have no way of knowing which type of stem cell will be of the most value in MS research.

Stem cells—adult or embryonic—could have the potential to be used to protect and rebuild tissues that are damaged by MS, and to deliver molecules that foster repair or protect vulnerable tissues from further injury.



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Background

There is broad agreement that the policy limiting the number of stem cell lines available for federally funded research is flawed.

- An insufficient supply of stem cell lines currently exists, as only 22 of the 70 approved lines are available to researchers. In addition, all of the available lines are contaminated by nutrients from mouse feeder cells. Many in the scientific community believe that these stem cell lines are unsuitable for research and hinder U.S. scientists' ability to capitalize on the potential breakthroughs from embryonic stem cell research.
- At the same time, it has become increasingly clear that stem cell research holds tremendous promise for MS and many other diseases and disorders. Research suggests that stem cells might have many uses: for delivery of growth factors and drugs, for tissue culture systems for drug and gene discovery, for understanding and modeling MS, and for repairing or protecting brain tissue.
- However, our scientific advisors have told us that we still don't know which type of stem cells will be most valuable for MS research, and thus we must support policies that promote the conduct of research using all types of stem cells.