



NEWS

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***For first time, federal tax dollars will be used
to encourage destruction of living embryonic human beings***

“Suffering patients and their families deserve better,” says Cardinal Rigali

CARDINAL RIGALI CRITICIZES DRAFT NIH GUIDELINES FOR DESTRUCTIVE STEM CELL RESEARCH

WASHINGTON—Cardinal Justin Rigali, Chairman of the U.S. Catholic bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, reacted today to new draft guidelines for human embryonic stem cell research issued late last week by the National Institutes of Health. The text of his statement follows:

New draft guidelines for federally funded stem cell research involving the destruction of human embryos, released Friday by the National Institutes of Health, mark a new chapter in divorcing biomedical research from its necessary ethical foundation. Without unconditional respect for the life of each and every member of the human race, research involving human subjects does not represent true progress. It becomes another way for some human beings to use and mistreat others for their own goals. Suffering patients and their families deserve better, through increased support for promising and ethically sound stem cell research and treatments that harm no one.

In most respects these draft guidelines reflect the policy approved but never implemented by the Clinton administration in 2000. However, the Clinton policy was limited to embryos that had been frozen, to ensure that parents had time to consider the decision to donate them for research; the new guidelines are broader in allowing destruction of newly created embryos that were never frozen, increasing the prospects for a rushed and biased consent process.

Despite supporters' constant claim that this agenda involves only embryos that “would otherwise be discarded,” the guidelines provide that the option of donating embryonic children for destructive research will be offered to parents alongside all other options, including those allowing the embryos to live. For the first time, federal tax dollars will be used to encourage destruction of living embryonic human beings for stem cell research – including human beings who otherwise would have survived and been born.

It is noteworthy that, despite calls for an even broader policy by some in Congress and the research community, the draft guidelines do not allow federally funded stem cell research using embryos specially created for research purposes by in vitro fertilization or cloning. We can hope that the NIH and Congress will continue to respect this ethical norm, and will realize that the alleged “need” for violating it is more implausible than ever due to advances in reprogramming adult cells to act like embryonic stem cells. However, congressional supporters of destructive human embryo research have already said they will pursue a more extreme policy. The Catholic bishops of the United States will be writing to Congress and the Administration about the need to restore and maintain barriers against the mistreatment of human life in the name of science, and we urge other concerned citizens to do the same.

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