

Bioethicist: Egg donors should be paid

August 10 2006

A U.S. bioethicist says women who donate their eggs for stem cell research should be compensated, as are other healthy research volunteers.

Case Western Reserve University Assistant Professor of Bioethics Insoo Hyun argues most volunteers participating in biomedical research are compensated when there are no direct benefits to them, and egg donors should be remunerated in the same manner.

Hyun notes egg donation is demanding of women's energy and time, requiring as many as 40 hours to provide eggs for research. The women endure painful hormone injections, often with unpleasant side effects, and their eggs are retrieved via a minor surgical procedure, he said.

Some ethicists are concerned that offering money for egg donation could undermine informed consent by creating an undue inducement to donate. But Hyun says regulating the process presents the perfect opportunity to reduce such risks.

Hyun believes ethical guidelines should recognize what women endure when donating their eggs, and that local ethical review bodies should decide how best to determine compensation levels and ensure a well monitored recruitment and informed consent process.

His commentary appears in the current issue of the journal Nature.

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