

Recommendations to the review of the legislation governing the use of human embryos in research

March 16 2011

The Australian Stem Cell Centre (ASCC) has submitted its recommendations to the independent committee reviewing the Australian legislation governing the use of human embryos in research. The ASCC's submission makes a series of recommendations in support of the current regulatory framework and the ongoing requirement for Australian scientists to be able to apply for a licence to derive new human embryonic stem cells for use in research.

In summary the ASCC recommends that:

1. The current national regulatory framework that oversees the responsible use of [human embryos](#) in Australian research continues without significant change.
2. Australian scientists should continue to have the opportunity to generate new human embryonic stem cell lines in licensed research projects as access to these cells remains vital to Australian research.
3. Research using human embryonic [stem cells](#) should continue to be regulated by the existing national guidelines that govern the ethical use of all human materials in research.

4. Support should be provided to assist Australian researchers to access stem cell lines from Australia and overseas provided they have been created in conditions consistent with Australian regulations.
5. Reproductive cloning should continue to be specifically banned in Australia.

Responsible research towards reducing human pain and suffering, with appropriate safeguards, must continue to remain an imperative in Australia. This Review is an opportunity for Australia to show global leadership and continue the period of legislative stability that has allowed Australian scientists to operate with confidence in this field.

The ASCC's Senior Manager of Research and Government, Dr Megan Munsie commented "The current Australian legislation strikes the right balance between protecting the rights and interests of the donors of the human embryos, and providing Australian researchers with access to these valuable cells." Dr Munsie went on to state that "Australian stem cell scientists, along with researchers from around the world, are using human [embryonic stem cells](#) to increase our understanding of how the body repairs itself following injury or disease. We are making important steps towards developing new treatments for a number of chronic and currently untreatable conditions".

Since the previous review of the legislation in 2005, there has been significant progress in the field of embryonic stem cell research with the commencement of the world's first clinical trial in the United States for acute spinal cord injury and the approval of two further trials for blindness. Striking progress has also been made using other types of stem cells over the last five years.

Dr Munsie went on to state "Any change to the current regulatory

framework is unnecessary at this time. The present system has proven to be robust, providing societal safeguards but not unduly restricting progress."

More information: The ASCC's full submission will be available to view on its website at [www.stemcellcentre.edu.au/For ...ive_Review_2011.aspx](http://www.stemcellcentre.edu.au/For...ive_Review_2011.aspx) and on legislationreview.nhmrc.gov.au/public_submissions

Provided by Research Australia

Citation: Recommendations to the review of the legislation governing the use of human embryos in research (2011, March 16) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-03-legislation-human-embryos.html>

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