

SUBMISSION

To : The Senate Community Affairs Committee.

On : Inquiry into the Legislative responses to
Recommendations of the Lockhart Review.

Date: 1st October 2006

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Recommendations:

1. This committee rejects each of the bills introduced in to the Senate by Senators Stott Despoja and Patterson.
2. This committee rejects the use of embryos in stem cell research regardless of circumstance.
3. This committee affirms legislation which only allows for the use of adult stem cells donated by informed consenting adults.
4. This committee recommends to the Senate that all stem cell research (embryo and adult tissue) for the purposes of changing a person's gender be prohibited.
5. This committee refers to the appropriate Parliamentary Standing Committee for review the existing situation where a Senator or Member of the House of Representatives who has an interest in the matter before a Committee can sit as a member of that Committee.

Preface

*My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.
If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood,
let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause:
Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole,
as those that go down into the pit:
We shall find all precious substance,
we shall fill our houses with spoil:
Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse:
My son, walk not thou in the way with them;
refrain thy foot from their path:
For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.
Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.
And they lay wait for their own blood;
they lurk privily for their own lives.
So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain;
which taketh away the life of the owners thereof.
Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets:
She crieth in the chief place of concourse,
in the openings of the gates: in the city
she uttereth her words, saying,
How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?
and the scorers delight in their scorning,
and fools hate knowledge?
Turn you at my reproof: behold,
I will pour out my spirit unto you,
I will make known my words unto you.
Because I have called, and ye refused;
I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;
But ye have set at nought all my counsel,
and would none of my reproof:*

Proverbs of Solomon 1:10-25 (King James Version)

Contents of Submission

Senators Stott Despoja and Patterson are seriously deluded as their proposed legislation concentrates almost exclusively on embryo research whilst most of the real progress in stem cell research is being achieved on adult tissue.

Senator Stott Despoja's proposed bill seems to be an endeavour to mislead the Australian community. On a brief read of the bill one could be excused from believing that stem cell research is prohibited. However, far from that being the truth, Senator Stott Despoja's bill proposes to allow anyone who has the will, ability and motivation the right to gain automatic Commonwealth approval, without the protection of community challenge, to use embryos for any scientific purpose.

If passed into legislation, Senator Stott Despoja's proposed bill will effectively allow abortion clinics free range to sell the aborted embryos to the highest bidder. Senator Stott Despoja seems to have taken up the challenge on behalf of the money greedy abortionists and the already dollar drunk multi-national pharmaceutical research corporations.



Wealth
replaces
Ethics

Stem cells can be obtained from sources other than embryos. They are called "adult stem cells." The use of adult stem cells is relatively free of ethical conflicts, as an adult may make an informed consent to donate bone marrow or any other tissue for the research. Both the pro-life and pro-choice movements disagree on the question of embryo research, yet the organizations are closer to agreement on the question of allowing further research on stem cells from adult sources.

There is some community agreement on the issue of using adult stem cells for research. There is no such agreement in our community on the question of using embryos for stem cell research.

Adult stem cell research began four decades before embryo-derived stem cell research. Whilst embryos are still being experimented upon in the laboratory, promising trials are underway using adult stem cells. Hence why the demand from two fundamentally misguided Senators to continue with a research project that is ethically flawed and four decades behind successful adult stem research.

The original assumption that adult stem cells have limited potential has been proven to be false. Indeed many respectable researches have proved with results that the greater potential exists within adult bone marrow research.

A research team from the University of Minnesota have found stem cells in the bone marrow of adults that are capable of becoming almost any of the 220 tissue types in the human body. These results offer far greater encouragement for success than the stumbling results from the immoral embryo research suggested by Senators Stott Despoja and Patterson.

Genuine informed consent is able to be obtained from an adult thus providing a legitimate, moral and ethical alternative than killing embryos or digging through the trash cans of abortion clinics. Adult stem cell research has already been used successfully for therapeutic benefit in human beings. Embryo stem cell research teams are not able to make that claim.

Adult stem cells are regenerative cells of the human body that have been nurtured to become a whole host of tissues, including heart tissue. With these adult stem cells, physicians have successfully treated autoimmune diseases such as lupus, multiple sclerosis, Crohn's disease, and rheumatoid arthritis. They have also restored proper cardiac function to heart attack victims, and improved movement in spinal cord injury patients. Yet Senators Stott Despoja and Patterson blindly demand embryonic stem cell research. A research method, that has not yielded one single success in the treatment of any ailment.

The advantages of using adult stem cells for research are many.

It involves a genuine informed consent of the donor, thus removing the ethical, immoral and criminal intent of those seeking to use embryos for research.

Adult tissue can be obtained with consent from adult donors by extracting stem cells from brains of cadavers, from bone marrow of living patients, and from human placentas.

A long held medical ethical principle is to "Do No Harm". The use of embryos for stem cell research is held by a substantial section, if not the majority, of the Australian community as "doing harm".

An exciting research discovery of the Montreal Neurological Institute is to use cell types derived from the second layer of skin, the dermis. It contains tissue which has been nurtured into producing different cell types which grow well in the laboratory. Of particular importance is that the cells contain the same DNA as the patient; thus there is no danger of rejection. The cells can be transplanted without the necessity of the patient taking immuno-suppressant drugs. This results in a considerable medical advantage for patients.



The use of a patient's own stem cells is even preferable to using embryonic stem cells because it avoids the problem of the body rejecting cells other than its own. A life after treatment not spent totally relying upon expensive drugs - satisfying the ethical principle of "Do No Harm". The medically harmful techniques proposed by Senators Stott Despoja and Patterson are not able to deliver this benefit.

Adult stem cell research has enormous implications for medical progress and relieving the distress of millions of people. Senators Stott Despoja and

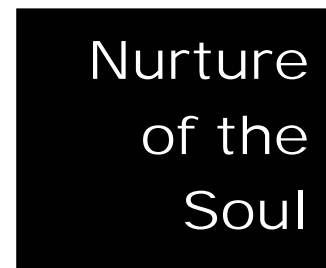
Patterson would probably join in the calls from the Transgender community for embryo stem cell research to aid the removal of medical impediments to Sex Reassignment Surgery and plastic and reconstructive therapies. Stem cell research should be limited to the relief of suffering and distress in our age, not for the benefit of elective cosmetics surgeons.

Research using stem cells derived from discarded human embryos have been surrounded by moral and ethical controversy. There is no clear agreement with our community on the use of embryos. This controversy has now been deepened because of the consistent lack of ethical principles in much of the research using human embryos. Key researchers in this area have forged key discoveries; flouted ethical protocols; deliberately omitted crucial data; bribed politicians and government officials; breached international laws; and violated the ethical principle of “do no harm”. Quite in contrast to these ethical, moral and criminal controversies, the research using adult tissue has been comparatively free of violations.

Neither of the proposed bills by Senators Stott Despoja and Patterson effectively prevents such ethical, moral and criminal violations from happening in the future.

A consensus of international embryologists is that embryos at fertilization are far more than a bunch of cells containing some potential to develop into a human being. Scientists have acknowledged for decades that the human embryo is absolutely different to a cell. A human skin cell, in and of itself will remain a skin cell, it can never generate by self-determination into a human being. On the other hand, an embryo has the genetic direction and the self-organization to mature in its growth and development. It therefore is a being, not simply a part of another being. Left to itself in its proper environment it will develop into a mature human being, not something other than a human being and not a part of a human being.

This subject is dealt at some length by M Scott Peck, in his book “Denial of the Soul”. Provokingly, he asks the question do “we want a society that encourages the soul and its development”. This is just as important in the stem cell research debate as its spiritual and medical perspectives on the question of euthanasia.



Senator Stott Despoja sits on this Committee as a replacement for Senator Allison for the committee's inquiry into the legislative responses to the Lockhart review. This is quite amazing. Why is a Senator allowed to sit on a Committee which as part of its task is to receive submissions from the Australian community commenting upon that particular Senator's own proposed bill? Surely this is a conflict of interest. It certainly would be in the rest of the community. How can any Senator be unbiased and objective when receiving submissions of his or her private bill? This occurrence is not democratic and should be reviewed and subsequently prohibited by the appropriate Parliamentary Standing Committee. In this instance with this particular Committee it is even more of a concern as Senator Stott Despoja is

a replacement for this committee hearing. It looks like a set up, and smells accordingly. This inequitable practice must cease.

In future, a Senator or Member of the House of Representatives should not be a member of committee when the Committee is accepting submissions and making recommendations on an issue in which the Parliamentarian has an interest. A proposed bill is such an interest. In such circumstances the member should stand down and place a submission before the Committee like any other citizen of the Australian community. In this particular instance Senator Stott Despoja has an unfair advantage over all other Australians making a submission to this Committee.

Conclusion

It is pertinent for his Committee to consider two clear ethical principles when making its decision and providing recommendations. These are:

1. “Do No Harm”; and
2. “Informed genuine consent”.

Donation of adult tissue by consenting adults meets these two ethical principles. The method proposed by Senators Stott Despoja and Patterson fails on these principles and should be rejected accordingly.