

A Critical Reading Of This Information Finds:

- ¹ Michigan doesn't have a ban on embryonic stem cell research. Human embryonic stem cell research has been occurring in Michigan since 2002. Killing human embryos for research is banned in Michigan, but this doesn't prevent researchers from importing embryonic stem cell lines and experimenting on them in Michigan.
- ² Embryonic stem cell research is already occurring at the University of Michigan at the Michigan Center for Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research which receives federal funding. David Van Andel, the Chief Executive of the Van Andel Institute, when asked by the Grand Rapids Press whether the Van Andel Institute will ever do embryonic stem cell research, said, "We don't have a reason to do it..... One of the major obstacles in embryonic stem cells that has not gotten a lot of attention is the fact that you're using somebody else's cells to make these, and you're going to plant them in your body. There's a huge rejection issue that has to be overcome, and nobody talked about that."
- ³ In the fall 2007 issue of a University of Michigan publication titled "explore LSI," Dr. Morrison describes Ivan Malliard, whom joined the University of Michigan in July of 2007 as "the top young stem cell biologist in the country on the job market last year." Morrison also notes that Malliard chose the University despite "intense competition from other research universities that were also trying to recruit him." In an Ann Arbor News article from September of 2006, Alan Saltiel, director of U of M's Life Sciences Institute called their five new faculty researchers "really first-rate" and said "they were among the top recruits in the country."
- ⁴ Dr. Morrison has also been doing work on human embryonic stem cells. His work is described on the web site of the Michigan Center for Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research as the "Isolation and characterization of Neural Crest Stem Cells from Human ES (embryonic stem) Cells." His hands aren't tied behind his back. He just can't kill human embryos for research in Michigan.
- ⁵ Not as "good?" What does Dr. Morrison mean by "good?" Stem cells from umbilical cord blood and adult stem cells have already been used to help treat more than 70 different ailments while embryonic stem cells have yet to be used to successfully treat a single human patient.

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Stem cells likely biggest issue in Nov.

By Jack Lessenberry, Syndicated Columnist
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LANSING -- The stage is set for an epic battle at the polls this November that may determine Michigan's future. And it doesn't involve a single candidate for office.

But it might be this year's most important contest of all. Michigan voters are all but certain to be asked to amend the ¹ state constitution and the state's ban on embryonic stem cell research.

That is certain to have scientific and ethical implications -- but also economic ones as well. ² Supporters of stem cell research can envision the University of Michigan or Grand Rapids' Van Andel Research Institute as places where cutting-edge research is done.

Eventually, supporters can easily imagine people coming from around the world to the U-M hospitals for stem-cell treatments for everything from Parkinson's disease to macular degeneration.

Supporters of CureMichigan, a pro-stem cell research group, turned in more than 570,000 signatures to the Secretary of State last week. Though they have yet to be checked and certified, that is far more than the number needed to win a place on the ballot.

To Sean Morrison, director of the University of Michigan's Center for Stem Cell Research, that was welcome news that couldn't have come too soon. Thanks to the influence of Right To Life and its allies in the Legislature, Michigan has had some of the nation's most restrictive laws banning stem cell research. ³ That has made it hard for Morrison to recruit and keep top-notch faculty.

Those boosting the state's effort to attract high-tech, new-economy jobs also worry that they will be doomed to failure if Michigan continues to have medieval laws blocking perhaps the most exciting and promising area of scientific research.

- ⁴ "How do you work with your hands tied behind your back?" Morrison has said. He has been doing research on stem cells taken from umbilical cords, but he said flatly they were
- ⁵ not as good as embryonic stem cells, despite propaganda to the contrary.

- 6 From 2003-2007, the federal government spent \$144 million on human embryonic stem cell research. They plan to spend an additional \$83 million in 2007 and 2008.
- 7 Andy Meisner's bill wouldn't have "toughened" the Michigan's ban on human cloning. It would have legalized human cloning by deceptively redefining cloning to mean the implantation of a human clone instead the creation of human clones. His legislation has been re-introduced by State Senator Gretchen Whitmer in the hopes of overturning Michigan's ban on human cloning.
- 8 They spent \$2 million to collect signatures because they had to pay circulators since this isn't a grassroots movement but rather a movement supported by very rich donors.
- 9 Brain drain? Lessenberry fails to name a single researcher who has left Michigan because they can't kill human embryos in Michigan.

6 President George W. Bush has banned federal funding for most embryonic stem cell research, but that ban's days are widely seen as numbered. The records of both John McCain and Barack Obama indicate they are much more open to stem cell research. California has ignored the ban, and its citizens have voted billions to fund work that many scientists agree is biology and modern medicine's future.

However, not everyone agrees. A powerful coalition of Roman Catholics and Christian fundamentalists have formed a group determined to defeat the measure. It is called MI-CAUSE (Michigan Citizens Against Unrestricted Science and Experimentation.) David Doyle, the anti-stem cell research group's spokesman, told the Associated Press he fears this would open the door to human cloning. He charged the constitutional amendment "allows unrestricted and unregulated experimentation on human embryos." But that is nonsense, said State Rep. Andy Meisner, (D-Ferndale.) He has been one of Michigan's most outspoken supporters of stem cell research, and has been frustrated that his attempts to legalize it have been blocked in the Legislature.

7 "There is already a law against human cloning. In fact I tried to toughen that law. And embryonic stem cells are not obtained through abortions," he noted. They are, in fact, obtained from excess embryos that fertility clinics would otherwise discard.

The fall campaign is expected to be both emotional and expensive. MI-CAUSE is really mainly a combination of the Michigan Catholic Conference and Michigan Right to Life, who are expected to pour a lot of money into trying to defeat the stem cell research initiative.

Those supporting stem cell research are likely to be more dependent on individual contributions.⁸ Larry Owen, a former Democratic gubernatorial candidate who chaired the ballot drive, said supporters spent nearly \$2 million just to get enough signatures.

Watch for this to be one of the most expensive ballot campaigns in Michigan history. If it fails, embryonic stem cell research is bound to continue, in California and, increasingly, other states. Michigan, however, will lose out on the action,⁹ and the state's brain drain is all but certain to intensify.