



Edinburgh, Brussels, Bonn, Milan, Lund, Lausanne

By email

29 May 2006

Dear ITRE committee members,

Human embryonic stem cells are poised to transform biomedical research. Their unique capacity to generate all the cell types in the body promises to revolutionise the way we model and understand human disease. In coming decades this will contribute to the development of new pharmaceutical and other medical treatments, delivering significant returns to the biotechnology and healthcare sectors, and to the many millions suffering from debilitating diseases such as juvenile diabetes and Parkinson's disease

Europe has world-renowned expertise in stem cell biology, but faces major competition. The Californian state government is investing \$3 billion of state funds in stem cell research, a trend now followed by other US states. Singapore, Japan and other Asian nations are making similar commitments. We represent cutting edge pan-European R&D projects initiated in Framework 6 to delineate the merits of embryonic, foetal and adult stem cells and to lay the groundwork for regenerative medicine. However, this investment will be stillborn and translation of excellent basic science into clinical applications will fail if restrictions are placed on human embryonic stem cell research in Framework 7.

The scientific case for determining the potential of these cells is undeniable. The European Group on Ethics have carefully considered the ethical issues, and concluded that:

"stem cell research aims to alleviate severe human suffering. In any case, the embryos that have been used for research are required to be destroyed. Consequently, there is no argument for excluding funding of this kind of research from the Framework Programme of research of the European Union if it complies with ethical and legal requirements"

Opinion 15, "Ethical aspects of human stem cell research and use" 14 November 2000

The judgement of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy should have a major influence on forthcoming votes in the European Parliament. We urge you to provide the leadership that will safeguard the competitiveness of European bioindustry and the future health of your constituents.

Yours sincerely,

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Find out about more about stem cell research from our website, www.eurostemcell.org.