

## **Cloning and Embryonic Stem Cell Research: Do only Religious Conservatives Support a Ban?**

This week's column marks the last in a five-part series on the controversial issue of human cloning and embryonic stem cell research. Though there is much more that could be said, there is one more primary misconception that I would like to address -- the belief that only conservative, religious voters and legislators are pushing to ban human cloning and embryonic stem cell research.

As we discussed last week, the overwhelming majority of advances in stem cell research have come from the non-controversial adult stem cell research that I heartily support. Yet, despite this fact, the supporters of controversial embryonic stem-cell research continue to push for the right to clone human beings and then destroy the human embryo they've created in order to harvest its stem cells (creatively labeled as "therapeutic cloning"). As part of their efforts to win public support, they have helped create a perception that only religious conservatives in so called "Red States" oppose human cloning and embryonic stem cell research. Indeed, many conservatives do oppose cloning; however, so do many folks who are not conservative.

Some leading feminists and noted environmentalists also oppose so-called therapeutic cloning. And, as I mentioned in a previous column, the official policies of the supposedly "progressive" European nations of France, Germany, Switzerland and Norway and our Canadian neighbors to the north all prohibit therapeutic cloning. These are not countries noted for their religious fervor.

So why would some feminist groups oppose this type of research one might ask? The answer lies in the potential it would create for the further exploitation of poor, often powerless, women in the U.S. and in developing nations.

Let's do the math. Each attempt to create a clone requires a human egg from a woman somewhere. The process to extract this egg from the women is not a simple undertaking and involves risks to her health and future ability to reproduce. Suppose medical science were to cultivate a need for more and more human clones. With the current cloning success rates being very low, it would require literally millions of eggs from female donors to maintain a robust cloning treatment program.

Suppose we take the hypothetical example of treating only those patients suffering with Diabetes in the United States (let alone the rest of the world) with embryonic stem cells. Even assuming a treatment could be developed from cloning (and there is no evidence any such cure is in the works from embryonic stem cells) it could very well take in excess of one billion human eggs!

These eggs will most likely come from women in financial straits desperate for a source of income or from young women perhaps away from home for college looking for quick cash. More human eggs could be procured by exploiting women in the developing world or even here at home. Human cloning creates a profit motive that will ultimately lead to abuse and feminist groups are beginning to realize it.

Likewise, some environmentalists oppose cloning not so much on moral grounds but rather on the belief that nature should not be tinkered with and that human cloning constitutes improper interference with the natural reproduction of the human race.

I hope it is clear by now that there are many individuals, organizations and nations around the globe that oppose human cloning. Yet in spite of the many valid arguments in favor of our position, I am sure you will soon be seeing more attacks against me and my colleagues in the House and Senate who oppose human cloning (also known as SCNT or “nuclear transfer”) and embryonic stem cell research as this debate heats up.

At last count the bipartisan coalition of legislators who have joined me and are cosponsoring my bill to ban human cloning numbered 18 senators (a majority of the Missouri Senate). Likewise, there are nearly 60 legislators who have signed an identical bill in the Missouri House of Representatives (with more expected in the near future). We are prepared to face the attacks of our opponents head on. The facts are on our side and I for one am anxious to test the arguments of my opponents in free and fair debate in the halls of the state capitol.

I hope this series of columns has been informative. If you missed a column or two they are available on my website at: [www.senate.mo.gov/bartle](http://www.senate.mo.gov/bartle) or you may contact my office at by e-mail at [matt\\_bartle@senate.state.mo.us](mailto:matt_bartle@senate.state.mo.us) or by phone at (888) 711-9278.