

JOIN THE DOTS

WHO'S BEHIND THE **PUSH** FOR
EMBRYO RESEARCH IN IRELAND



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“Truth always lags last, limping along on the arm of time.”

Baltasar Gracián

FOREWORD

In December of 2001 a billboard appeared across Ireland. It featured then Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, and his colleague Micheál Martin, then Minister for Health, and called on these politicians not to allow experiments on human embryos to take place in Ireland.

Produced by the pro-life group, Youth Defence, the billboard's message was criticised as being far-fetched. But it was, in fact, a prescient campaign, since the push to legalise embryo research in this country had already begun.

As this investigation reveals, during the past ten years a small but politically powerful group of people has attempted to introduce human embryonic stem cell research and cloning to Ireland. Despite strong public opposition, that's still their goal.

This report identifies who those people are, and who appointed them to positions of power. It also exposes how science and ethics are being trampled down in an unseemly rush to legalise experiments on human life.



A small but politically powerful group of people have attempted to legalise human embryonic stem cell research and cloning in Ireland

Important questions are asked and explored: Why did Micheál Martin and Mary Harney create quangos which were absolutely stacked against the human embryo? What role did the EU play in pushing for embryo research? Why was the opposition of a majority of UCC academics to allowing embryonic stem

cell research in the university covered up? What link exists between the Governing Body of UCC and global pharmaceutical corporations that are financially invested in embryo research? Who are the companies pouring billions into research on embryonic stem cells? What's the identity of the "vested interests" funding the secretive Irish Stem Cell Foundation? And why did Mary Harney suggest that embryonic stem cell research could take place in Ireland if the embryos had firstly been destroyed in another country?

These are important questions because the answers signify whether we respect human life, and whether we are, in turn, respected by our government. Stem cell research is hugely promising, and may lead to cell-based therapies to treat some of mankind's most debilitating diseases. But the fact remains that the real progress - producing treatments that actually work for patients - has been made in adult stem cell research, not in research that involves killing human embryos. One recent study showed that over 50,000 patients are now being treated with adult stem cell therapies every year.

In fact, the good news from ethical stem cell research has become so pervasive that the headline in a recent report from the *Associated Press* read: "Adult stem cell research far ahead of embryonic".

That's also a key finding of this report: lethal research on embryos destroys human life and has failed miserably to help patients. It goes without saying that destroying innocent human life is, in itself, always morally wrong.

That moral view is shared by a very significant majority of Irish people, whose opposition to embryo research has been recorded in consecutive opinion polls. Yet, as this report shows, the opinion of the people has been deliberately and arrogantly ignored by elitist political quangos hellbent on pursuing their own agenda.

In the coming months Mary Harney will bring forward legislation on the human embryo. Her actions will tell whether she believes the people, or the elite, are in charge.

DR SEÁN Ó DOMHNAILL
OCTOBER 2010

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INTRODUCTION

Ireland has been hit by the worst economic downturn in living memory. Almost half a million people are on the dole, emigration is on the rise, and families struggle to pay the mortgage as the State pumps billions into bailing out the banks.

In the midst of the chaos, Mary Harney, the Health Minister overseeing our chaotic health service, is planning to bring forward legislation relating to the human embryo. This legislation will decide whether or not Irish law, and therefore Irish society, protects human life from the moment of conception.

The question is this: Will Mary Harney do the right thing and ensure legal protection for the human embryo from the moment of conception. Will she ban the unethical practices of embryonic stem cell research and human cloning?

Or will she make Ireland one of the most radical countries in the world when it comes to experimenting on human life? Will millions in taxpayer funding be wasted on embryonic stem cell research which destroys human life and has, to date, produced no successful medical treatments?

As we will reveal, Mary Harney's past actions indicate that she may attempt to bring forward legislation which targets human embryos for deliberate destruction. In particular, she has said that she will reference the recommendations of the Commission on Assisted Human Reproduction which would lead to human cloning, lethal experiments on human embryos, and other horrors. However, as this report shows, the construction of that Commission could only have delivered one outcome: one that denied the right-to-life to human beings at the earliest stages of their lives. It was just one of the many sneaky stratagems undertaken to further the push for embryo research in Ireland.

The irony is that the world is fast turning away from experiments on human embryos. Private funding is now abandoning embryonic stem cell research and is being diverted towards ethical alternatives. That's because where embryo research relies on hype, adult stem cell research is delivering hope - to patients with cancer, Parkinson's disease, and other serious conditions. That's where the future lies: that's where Ireland's focus should be.

This is the story of the push to legalise embryo research in Ireland. We identify the key political, legal and commercial interests involved, spell out the facts about stem cells and ethics, and explain that the human embryo has an intrinsic right-to-life which must be legally protected.

We reveal the deceptive manoeuvres undertaken - and the false perceptions deliberately created - in the decade-long attempt to have human life treated as disposable research material.



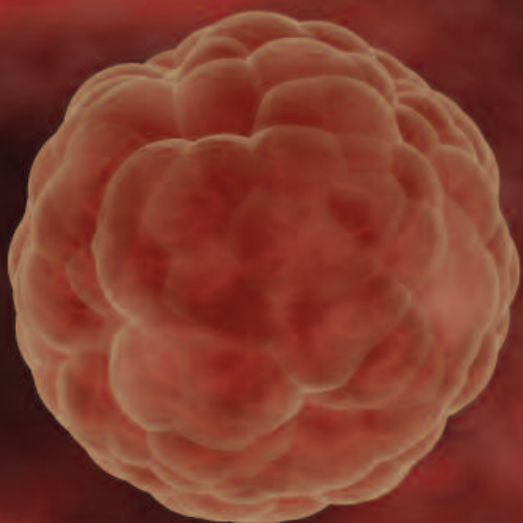
With our health service in crisis, we must not allow the Minister to destroy human life and to waste taxpayers' funds on embryonic stem cell research which has utterly failed to help patients

Our country has been brought to ruin by arrogant elitists who destroyed our economy and impaired our future. Now that self-same arrogance wants to force the Irish people to accept lethal and unethical experiments on human life. We should not allow this to happen. It's time the pro-life majority made its voice heard.

NIAMH UÍ BHRIAIN
OCTOBER 2010

1

STEM CELLS: WHY THE CONTROVERSY?



STEM CELLS:

WHY THE CONTROVERSY?

Stem cell research is enormously important. It has huge potential, and early breakthroughs indicate that stem cell therapies can be used to successfully treat patients suffering from conditions ranging from spinal cord injuries to chemical blindness.

The exciting thing about stem cells is their ability to turn into other specialised types of cells. Thus, a stem cell has the potential to turn into liver cells, skin cells, nerve cells etc, and this hugely promising ability has opened up the possibility of treatments for a great many patients.

Right now, patients with seriously debilitating conditions, some of which were previously considered incurable, are being successfully treated by stem cell therapies. All of these therapies use adult stem cells, usually obtained from the patient's own body. This form of stem cell research is ethical, is helping many thousands of patients, and doesn't harm anyone.

But there are currently three sources of stem cells – adult stem cells, induced pluripotent stem cells (which involves manipulating or reprogramming adult stem cells) and embryonic stem cells. Embryonic stem cells are obtained by destroying human embryos, and twenty years of experiments on human embryos have spectacularly failed to produce any cures. Embryo research is deeply unethical because it involves lethal experiments on human life at its earliest stages, and that's something we should all find disturbing.

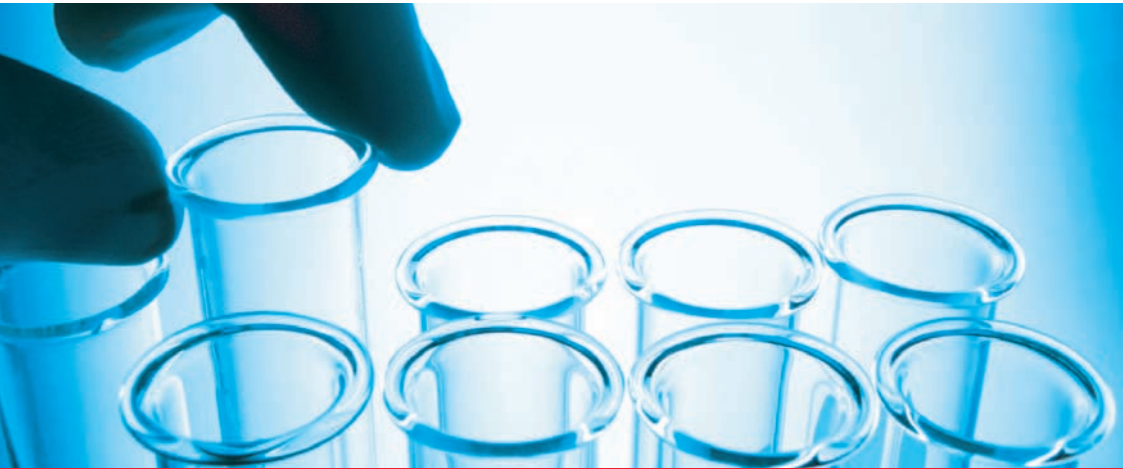
Sadly, experimenting on human life is not a new practice. Several Nazi concentration camps, including Auschwitz and Dachau, conducted horrific experiments on children and adults, usually resulting in death, serious disability or disfigurement.

The horror of the Nazi experiments caused right-thinking people to resolve that never again would lethal research on human life be permitted. But, unfortunately, that gradually began to change.

Lured by the prospect of success and the extraordinary potentiality of

stem cells, some countries allowed unethical scientists to undertake embryonic stem cell research - a process which always kills the human embryo. The cloning of tiny human beings for further experiments soon followed.

However, since experiments on human embryos have utterly failed to produce any of the much-hyped cures, funding from private investors has now started to slip away. That funding is now being directed towards ethical stem cell research - such as advances in adult stem cell research and the new field of induced pluripotent stem cell research.



73 different medical conditions are being successfully treated by adult stem cell therapies. For embryonic stem cell therapies that number is ZERO

The reason for this is simple: ethical adult stem cell research, which doesn't harm anyone, has so far produced successful therapies for patients with 73 different medical conditions – and that number is growing.¹ For therapies using

1. 'Treating diseases with adult stem cells'. *Science*, 19 January 2007
Also see <http://www.stemcellresearchfacts.org/stem-cell-successes/>

embryonic stem cells that number is zero. It is now accepted that stem cells taken from human embryos have been found to be prone to multiply out of control, causing tumours, and are less easily cultivated into specific types of tissue than their adult counterparts.^{1,2,3}

In November 2007, Professor Ian Wilmut, the scientist who cloned Dolly the sheep, announced he was abandoning the cloning of human embryos in stem cell research, because of new developments in ethical stem cell research, such as induced pluripotent stem cell research.⁴ He was not alone. As embryonic stem cell research continues to fail, investors are voting with their feet.

A January 2010 editorial in the Los Angeles-based *Investor's Business Daily* magazine revealed that the state of California had pumped \$3 billion into research at the Institute for Regenerative Medicine seeking some medical use for stem cells obtained from human embryos. But, the editorial pointed out, five years later “there have been no cures, no therapies and little progress.” The Californian institute is now quietly diverting its resources to adult stem cell research.

It would seem that time may have caught up with those pushing for embryo research in Ireland. But where did this push come from? Who is funding it? And how are Irish politicians involved in a deliberate attempt to promote deadly research on human beings at the earliest stages of their lives?

That story begins with Dolly the Sheep.

1. Carson, CT, Aigner S & Gage FH, ‘Stem cells: the good, bad and barely in control’, *Nature Medicine*, November 2006

2. Shih CC, Forman SJ, Chu P, et al. ‘Human embryonic stem cells are prone to generate primitive, undifferentiated tumors in engrafted human fetal tissues in severe combined immunodeficient mice’, *Stem Cells Development*, December 2007

3. Blum B and Benvenisty N, ‘The Tumorigenicity of Human Embryonic Stem Cells’, *Advances in Cancer Research*, July 2008

4. Lehrman Sally, ‘No more cloning around’, *Scientific American*, August 2008
<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=no-more-cloning-around>

2

SETTING THE STAGE



- After Dolly
- Politicians and commissions
 - Stacking the odds against human life
- The double whammy
 - Ignoring the public
- Denying the rights of the human embryo

AFTER DOLLY

Dolly the Sheep – the first cloned animal – was unveiled to the world in 1996, propelling cloning and embryonic stem cell research onto centre stage. The first embryonic stem cell lines were isolated by a team led by Dr James Thomson in the University of Wisconsin in 1998.

Exaggerated possibilities for using embryonic stem cells caused some scientists to ignore the glaring ethical controversy at the heart of embryo research. Within the European Union (EU), some scientists were pressing for approval to experiment on embryos, and some EU states, such as the UK, had already stripped human life at its earliest stages of all protection or respect.



Dolly the sheep, born on the 5 July 1996, was the first mammal to be cloned. She lived until the age of six

An EU ethics advisory group – the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE) – began to discuss the issues surrounding

embryonic stem cell research. In particular, they considered whether lethal research on human embryos should be permitted by the EU, and whether such research should receive EU taxpayer funding.

The EGE advises the European Commission and the European Parliament. In November 1998 they advised that research on human embryos should not be banned. They said that their decision reflected the diverse attitudes to embryo research within Europe.¹

The November 2000 report of the EGE further advised that human embryonic stem cell research should be funded by the Framework Programme of Research of the European Union.²

This opened up the possibility of Irish taxpayers funding EU-sponsored embryonic stem cell research - and, as we will see, that's precisely what happened.

The EGE's actions were pivotal in beginning an EU-wide push to legalise and fund embryonic stem cell research. Amongst the members of the EGE was Irish scientist, Dr Peter Whittaker, who co-authored the EGE report endorsing lethal experiments on human embryos. He then became involved in the Irish Council for Bioethics: an Irish taxpayer-funded body which has campaigned for embryonic stem cell research to be legalised in this country.

Following the EGE's advice to the European Commission, the then Irish Minister for Health, Micheál Martin, established a commission to examine regulation and public policy in relation to human embryonic life and assisted human reproduction.

His appointments to the commission were ominous.

1. Noëlle Lenoir, 'Europe Confronts the Embryonic Stem Cell Research Challenge', *Science*, 25 Feb 2000

Also http://ec.europa.eu/european_group_ethics/docs/avis12_en.pdf

2. 'Ethical Aspects of human stem cell research and use', Opinion of the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies to the European Commission, November 2000

http://ec.europa.eu/european_group_ethics/docs/avis15_en.pdf

POLITICIANS & COMMISSIONS

In March 2000, the Irish Commission on Assisted Human Reproduction (CAHR) was set up by Health Minister, Micheál Martin. From the beginning, it was stacked against the right to life of the human embryo.

The intention behind the choice of appointments to the CAHR - which cost the taxpayer €634,000 - was very clear. This body was to play a crucial part in the campaign for embryo research in Ireland.



Micheál Martin set up the Commission on Assisted Human Reproduction in 2000. It was stacked 20 to 1 against the right to life of the human embryo

The purpose of the CAHR was to create the perception that a consensus in favour of embryo research exists amongst Irish experts. That is very far from the reality of the situation.

In fact, what has actually happened is that those who favour permitting experiments on the human embryo have been chosen by the government to form unrepresentative quangos. These quangos have then gone on to advise the government to legislate to allow experiments on the human embryo.

Given the composition of this particular quango - the CAHR - it could have reached no other conclusion, and its work had the inauspicious effect of creating the illusion that approval of embryonic stem cell research was inevitable.

A small number of carefully-chosen political appointees has been placed on key government committees. They have then used their positions on these committees to lead a campaign to rob embryonic human life of the respect and the status it deserves.

The people making those appointments were Micheál Martin, and his successor, Mary Harney. Both have chosen appointees whose views, as revealed by their actions, mirrored those of both Ministers when it came to funding and supporting embryo research.

Thus, when Mary Harney now says that the government must consider the recommendations of the Commission on Assisted Human Reproduction, she does so knowing that the Commission was handpicked by her government colleague to make those recommendations possible in the first place. (And she does so having voted to use your taxes to fund embryo research in the EU.)

Any commission examining an issue as sensitive and as controversial as embryo research should be representative and balanced. Where there are two strongly diverging views in the scientific community they should at least be equally represented. That didn't happen with the CAHR.

STACKING THE ODDS AGAINST HUMAN LIFE

What happened instead was that the government appointees to the Commission, by an astonishing 20 to 1 majority, supported experimentation on the human embryo, the deliberate destruction of human embryos, and even human cloning. The arrogance displayed in stacking the Commission in this way is simply inexcusable. Its composition in no way reflected the views of the Irish scientific community, nor the Irish people.

The fact is that Irish scientists hold a spectrum of views in relation to

embryo research. Leading experts such as Dr Martin Clynes, the Director of the National Institute for Cellular Biology in DCU, and William Reville, Professor of Biochemistry in UCC, for example, strongly oppose lethal experiments on embryos. Others, such as Trinity College geneticist, Professor David McConnell, support human embryonic stem cell research. It's worth noting that the Irish Medical Council, which regulates Irish medical practice, outlaws embryo research.

As we will see in Chapter 4, academic opinion was surveyed on the issue on one occasion in University College Cork. Faculty members were asked their views on a proposed policy allowing embryonic stem cell research in the university. A clear majority of UCC academics opposed the proposal - but their views were ignored by powerful bodies pushing their own lethal agenda.

One thing is certain, however, no representative scientific body, in Ireland or anywhere else in the world, would ever contain an absurd 95% majority in favour of embryo experimentation and human cloning – all of which were eventually proposed by the CAHR.

Quangos are criticised for being unelected and unaccountable, and this is the worst use of such quangos: creating handpicked bodies to achieve a politically desired outcome. Dressing up said quangos as representative, independent opinion is a deceitful political strategy, and an abuse of power.

Micheál Martin appointed Professor Dervilla Donnelly as Chair of his Commission on Assisted Human Reproduction. Professor Donnelly was a high-ranking member of the European Science Foundation, who issued a policy briefing supporting embryo research and cloning in June 2001.¹

Another key appointee was UCC law lecturer Dr Deirdre Madden - a vocal advocate of embryonic stem cell research who has been appointed to numerous key positions by Mary Harney and Micheál Martin. Documents released under the Freedom of Information Act show that Deirdre Madden wrote

1. "Human stem cell research: scientific uncertainties and ethical dilemmas", European Science Foundation Policy Briefing, June 2001
<http://www.esf.org/publications/science-policy-briefings.html>

to Micheál Martin in February 2000 asking to be appointed to the CAHR and pointing out that she had a "special interest" in the issues under consideration. Clearly the Minister was happy to oblige. Dr Madden has described US federal funding of embryonic stem cell research as a "very welcome development" and called for public funding of the same.¹ She was also to the fore in the push to experiment on embryonic stem cell lines in UCC.

CAHR member Professor Andrew Green spoke out in favour of EU funding for human embryonic stem cell research, and was later a member of the Irish Council for Bioethics which sought to deny the human embryo full moral status. Similarly, his CAHR colleague Professor Tom Cotter supported the introduction of embryonic stem cell research in UCC.²



Deirdre Madden pictured with Minister Mary Harney: Madden has led the push to legalise embryonic stem cell research in Ireland, and is a favourite appointee of Harney

1. Gantly Dara, 'Where funds will stem from', *Irish Times*, 20 January 2009
<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/health/2009/0120/12332059660918.html>

2. 'College chiefs face hot debate over use of stem-cells', *Irish Independent*, 28 October 2008

The assisted human reproduction industry was also represented on the Commission. Dr Mary Wingfield, an IVF specialist, was later to testify in the High Court that “a fertilised egg is a long, long way from being a human”.¹

Other political appointees to CAHR were advocates of abortion – hardly likely to favour protecting the unborn child from conception. Dr. Alpha Connelly represented the government-appointed Human Rights Commission which called for the legalization of abortion in Ireland.²

CAHR member, Dr Peter McKenna, of the Rotunda Hospital, had led the hospital towards freezing human embryos, and later supported legalising embryonic stem cell research as a member of the Irish Council for Bioethics.

Only one member of the Commission - Professor Gerry Whyte of Trinity College - represented the views of the majority of the Irish people on this issue. His opinion was that “..legal protection should apply once the process of fertilisation is complete.” He added that “respect for this life and for its ability to relate, in an absolutely unique manner, to the rest of humanity demands that we should do nothing deliberately to destroy the embryo and that, where possible, we should facilitate its development.”

In a 2005 hearing before the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children Professor Whyte said that he was “author of the sole dissent on this issue in the commission. It is not a comfortable position in a commission of over 20 members.”³

That, of course, was the whole point of the Commission chosen by Micheál Martin. In this quango, out of 21 members, the number representing the majority view of the Irish people was precisely one.

1. Roche -v- Roche & ors, Judgment of Mr. Justice Geoghegan, 15/12/2009 Supreme Court Record Number: 469/06 & 59/07

2. Irish Human Rights Commission CEDAW Submission, January 2005

3. <http://debates.oireachtas.ie/DDebate.aspx?F=HEJ20050915.xml&Ex=All&Page=3>

THE DOUBLE WHAMMY

While the remarkably imbalanced Commission on Assisted Human Reproduction began working on its report, the Minister for Enterprise Trade and Employment, Mary Harney (who would vote in favour of EU funding of embryo research later in the year), was busy inaugurating another taxpayer-funded quango.

This was the Irish Council for Bioethics (ICB) and it would prove just as loaded and partisan as the CAHR.

The ICB was launched in January 2003 at a cost of €437,000. Its members included Professor Peter Whittaker - a member of the EU Ethics Group which kick-started the EU's push for embryo research in 1998.



Dr Siobhán Sullivan of the Irish Council for Bioethics said that the embryo targeted for destruction would be respected “by using it for the good of society”

Some of the members of the ICB and the CAHR overlapped at times – Professor Andrew Green has served on both, as has Dr Peter McKenna, while philosopher Dolores Dooley who headed up the ICB was also called to join a work group of the CAHR. Long-time advocate of abortion, retired GP Mary Henry, was also brought on board by the ICB.

Perhaps the most interesting of the ICB appointments, however, was Dermot Gleeson, a politically-connected senior counsel who previously served as Attorney General and was also Chairman of AIB. As shown in Chapter 4, his vote as Chair on the Governing Body of UCC led to the university's 2008 decision to begin research on human embryonic stem cell lines.

So the facts reveal that within a two-year period, two leading government ministers used their power to appoint a small number of key people to positions where they could campaign to allow embryo research to take place in Ireland. In doing so, they sought to deliberately and ruthlessly override the views of the pro-life majority.

IGNORING THE PUBLIC

Some lip service was paid to the public, of course. Both the CAHR and the ICB started out by asking for submissions from the public. Those submissions were then completely ignored once it became clear that the vast majority of the public supported protecting the human embryo.

A poll undertaken by the CAHR in December 2002 found that only 16% of those polled agreed that so-called surplus embryos should be donated for research once IVF treatment was complete. Submissions to the CAHR showed a strong majority in favour of protecting the human embryo, while attendees at the Commission's conference in Dublin Castle were at least two-to-one against embryo research.¹

This mattered little to the CAHR who, it would seem, had already decided what their recommendations were going to be.

1. Report of the Commission on Assisted Human Reproduction, 2005
<http://www.dohc.ie/publications/cahr.html>

The extent of their contempt for Ireland's pro-life ethos was revealed by their choice of Baroness Warnock as guest speaker at the CAHR's Dublin Castle conference in February 2003. The Baroness had previously stated that the human embryo should not be afforded respect since they were fated to be "poured down the sink."¹

(Baroness Warnock has also described premature babies as "bed blockers" and said that people with dementia may have a "duty to die".² Following UCC's approval of embryonic stem cell research, she said scientists would be "failing in their moral duty" if they refused to carry out such research.³) At the CAHR's conference her views were criticised by members of the public who also pointed out that the panel of speakers was almost entirely against protecting the human embryo.



The infamous Baroness Warnock who was invited to speak at the CAHR conference in Dublin. She has described premature babies as "bed blockers"; said people with dementia may have a "duty to die"; and argued that scientists have a "moral duty" to carry out embryo research

1. Baroness Mary Warnock, House of Lords Select Committee, 5 December 2002
http://ec.europa.eu/european_group_ethics/archive/2001_2005/members_en.htm

2. Beckford, Martin. 'Baroness Warnock: Dementia sufferers may have a 'duty to die'
Telegraph. 18 September 2008.

3. <http://www.educationmatters.ie/2008/11/26/experts-debate-decision-to-allow-embryonic-stem-cell-research/>

In 2007, the Irish Council for Bioethics invited the public to complete a questionnaire and make submissions on the status of the human embryo. The invitation was taken up by almost 2200 people.

The results were overwhelmingly pro-life: 69% stated they believed that the embryo had full moral status from fertilisation, while 70% of the respondents also opposed research on human embryos. A further 65% said they would be unwilling to use medical treatments that were developed using embryonic stem cells.¹

As we will see, these majority views were entirely disregarded by the ICB, who weren't to be deflected from their agenda of legalising embryo research in Ireland.²

Likewise, information obtained under the Freedom of Information Act shows that 1300 submissions opposing embryonic stem cell research were received in 2008 by the UCC. The Ethics Board of the university decided they would simply ignore the views of the people who had taken the time to make submissions. In addition, they also sought to put a disingenuous spin on the inconvenient fact that a clear majority of UCC academics also opposed the measure. The stance of the Ethics Board was no doubt influenced by its Chair, Dr Deirdre Madden, who was, of course Micheál Martin's appointee to the CAHR.

Democracy is seriously undermined when the views of the people are repeatedly ignored by government quangos. And the practice of organising fake consultations – where opinions are sought and then simply discarded – is to be deplored and should not be tolerated. Yet this dishonest ploy was used again and again in the push for embryo research in Ireland.

Quite clearly, these taxpayer-funded, government-appointed bodies had an agenda to fulfil. The opinions of the Irish people - and the intrinsic right to life of every human embryo - were not going to be allowed to stand in the way of that agenda.

1. 'Ethical, Scientific and Legal Issues Concerning Stem Cell Research', 2008
<http://www.bioethics.ie/uploads/docs/StemCellReport.pdf>

2. Ibid

DENYING THE RIGHTS OF THE HUMAN EMBYRO

It will come as no surprise then, that the Commission on Assisted Human Reproduction and the Irish Council for Bioethics went on to recommend that embryo experimentation and destruction, and even human cloning, be permitted in Ireland.

The CAHR's report was issued in March 2005. It sought to make Ireland one of the most liberal countries in the world when it came to the deliberate killing of the human embryo.

Amongst the CAHR's recommendations were:¹



The Commission sought to make embryo research and cloning legal in Ireland - and their recommendations are now being considered by Mary Harney in drafting legislation on the human embryo

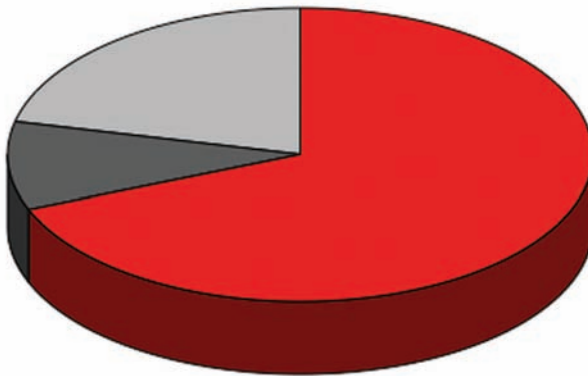
- Legalization of human embryonic stem cell research
- Denial of legal protection to the human embryo outside the womb
- Sex-selection of embryos and embryo screening – destroying embryos found to be “less than perfect”
- Cloning of human embryos for use in research

1. Report of the Commission on Assisted Human Reproduction, 2005
<http://www.dohc.ie/publications/cahr.html>

The recommendations of the CAHR followed the extremely permissive British model which allows for the wholesale destruction of the human embryo. These recommendations are now under consideration by Mary Harney as she prepares legislation on human life at its earliest stage.

In May 2008 the Irish Council for Bioethics (ICB) issued their report.¹ They were in enthusiastic agreement with the CAHR and called for “surplus” IVF embryos to be destroyed to generate stem cell lines for research. They argued, with breathtaking arrogance, that they would not grant “full moral status” to the human embryo, as if the matter of “granting” the right-to-life was theirs to decide.

THE ICB ASKED: WHEN DOES THE EMBRYO ACQUIRE FULL MORAL STATUS?



- 69% said at fertilisation
- 9.7% said when implanted in the womb
- 21% said at some other / later stage

THE ICB IGNORED THE RESULT OF THEIR OWN PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND SAID THE EMBRYO SHOULD BE DENIED FULL MORAL STATUS

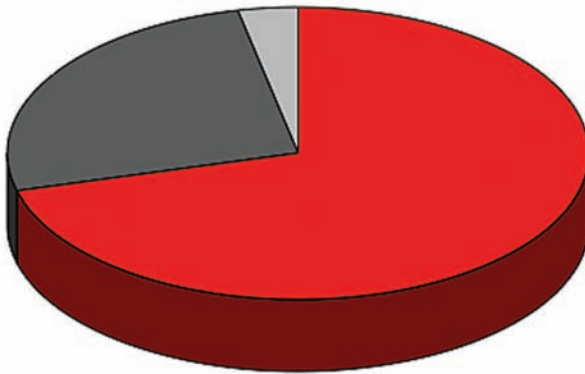
1. 'Ethical, Scientific and Legal Issues Concerning Stem Cell Research', November 2008
<http://www.bioethics.ie/uploads/docs/StemCellReport.pdf>

On almost every issue, the Council were diametrically opposed to the views of the public whose submissions they had sought - and then ignored.

At the launch of the report ICB spokeswoman, Dr Siobhán Sullivan, said that the embryo targeted for destruction would be respected “by using it for the good of society”: a rather chilling statement with unfortunate historical overtones.¹ (Dr Sullivan has since been given a position on an EU Commission expert group to develop ethical guidelines for EU-funded researchers.)

The ICB’s report was unanimously approved by its thirteen members.

THE ICB ASKED: IS IT ACCEPTABLE TO USE HUMAN EMBRYOS FOR STEM CELL RESEARCH?



- 70.6% said NO
- 25.8% said YES
- 3.5% said they DIDN'T KNOW

THE ICB IGNORED THE VIEWS OF THE PUBLIC AND DECIDED LETHAL RESEARCH ON HUMAN EMBRYOS SHOULD BE LEGAL IN IRELAND

1. Downes J., ‘Pro-Life group attacks council’s “pretend morality”’, *Irish Times*, 24 April 2008
<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2008/0424/1208987670368.html>

Quite clearly the slip-up that had allowed a dissenting voice on the CAHR was not to be tolerated again.

Both reports were feted by the media, who continue to quote them approvingly when reporting on issues pertaining to human life at its earliest stages. However, following the publication of the ICB's report, a group of leading scientists and academics published an open letter critical of its findings. They wrote:

"The fact that the [ICB] paper was unanimous (13-0, a rather curious degree of unanimity, given the diversity of opinion on the topic), might signal to legislators that the recommendations represent a general consensus in the academic and biomedical communities. This is not the case, and we are writing to express our strongest possible dissent from the ICB opinion with regard to destructive research on human embryos."

These distinguished experts concluded that the ICB's opinion "has no sound ethical, medical or scientific basis".¹

That's a conclusion shared by the majority of the Irish people. It's also the conclusion Mary Harney should recognize when drafting legislation on the human embryo. But, as an examination of the key events and players now reveals, the push for embryo research was neither about respecting human life nor the Irish people.

1. Academics-against-embryo-destruction', *Irish Independent*, 9 May 2008

<http://www.independent.ie/opinion/letters/academics-against-embryo-destruction-1370167.html>

3

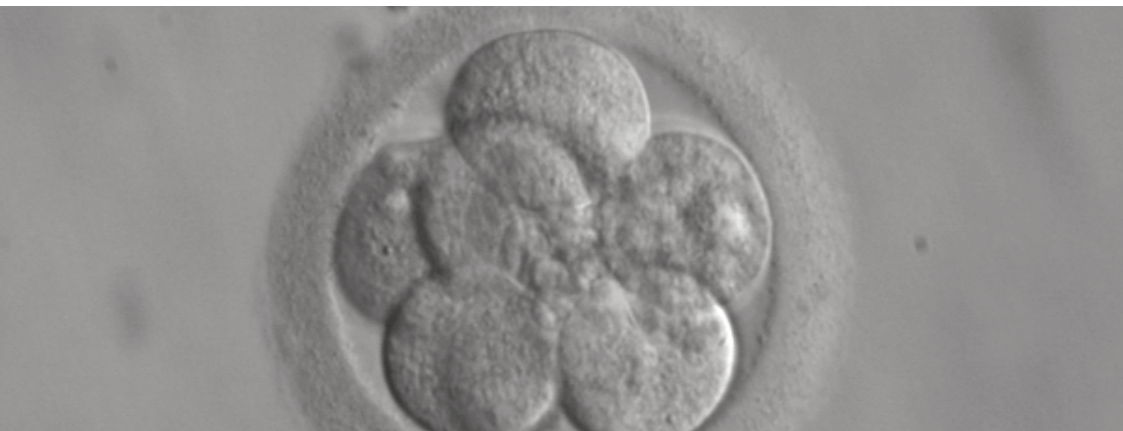
THE KEY EVENTS AND PLAYERS



- Timeline of events
- Join the dots
- Who's who

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

The set-up of these quangos - the Commission on Assisted Human Reproduction and the Irish Council for Bioethics - was part of a choreographed sequence of manoeuvres which took place over the past ten years with the aim of legalising embryonic stem cell research in Ireland. Several key figures - Deirdre Madden, Mary Harney, Micheál Martin, Dermot Gleeson and, later, Dr Stephen Sullivan - emerged as key players in that push.



The photograph shows 8-celled embryo. In 1998 and 2000 the EGE, an EU advisory body, argued for EU funding of embryo research

NOVEMBER 1998: EU ethics body (which includes Irish academic Peter Whittaker) issues their opinion to the European Commission supporting embryonic stem cell research. Their follow-up report calls for EU funding to be made available for such research.

MARCH 2000: Health Minister, Micheál Martin TD, establishes the Irish Commission on Assisted Human Reproduction (CAHR).

NOVEMBER 2001: EU Parliament rejects a ban on embryo research.

MARCH 2002: The Irish government proposes an amendment to the Constitution which would deny protection to the human embryo outside of the womb. The amendment is rejected by the people.

DECEMBER 2002: A poll undertaken by CAHR found that only 16% of those polled agreed that surplus embryos should be donated for research once IVF treatment is complete.

JANUARY 2003: Mary Harney, then Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, inaugurates the Irish Council for Bioethics (ICB) with Dermot Gleeson as Vice-Chairman. Gleeson becomes Chairman in November 2003.

FEBRUARY 2003: Health Minister, Micheál Martin, opens CAHR conference with notorious advocate of embryo research and euthanasia, Baroness Warnock, presented as a key speaker.

NOVEMBER 2003: Mary Harney votes to allow EU funding for embryo research at the EU Council of Ministers. Opposing the measure, MEP Dana Rosemary Scallon said this was the first time that the European Union had attempted to fund research into an area which was illegal or unconstitutional in any member state. The vote is the subject of much controversy. Harney is accused by Fianna Fáil back bencher Ned O’Keeffe of voting to fund stem cell research on embryos without Cabinet approval.¹

1. Beesley Arthur, ‘Ahern and Harney dismiss stem-cell plan claims’, *Irish Times*, 26 November 2003
<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/frontpage/2003/1126/1069801661040.html>

At this time Mary Harney states that embryonic stem cell research could take place in Ireland in certain circumstances provided that the embryos were not sourced in Ireland.¹



Mary Harney voted for EU funding of embryo research in 2003. She also suggested embryonic stem cell research might be able to take place in Ireland

2004: Micheál Martin appoints CAHR member and advocate of embryo research Deirdre Madden to the Medical Council. The Council's pro-life ethical guidelines come under review.

MARCH 2005: Commission on Assisted Human Reproduction issues its report calling for lethal research on human embryos, for the destruction of "surplus" IVF embryos, and for the cloning of embryos for research purposes

JULY 2006: Micheál Martin (now Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment) votes in favour of extending funding for research on human embryos at the EU Council. Irish taxes are now funding this research in other countries. The Minister says he is "open" to human embryonic stem cell research.²

1. Staunton Denis, 'No decision reached on funding stem cell research', *Irish Times*, 4 December 2003
<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2003/1204/1070408828015.html>

2. "Martin 'open' to stem cell research", *Irish Times*, 6 June, 2006
<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2006/0629/1146660094866.html>

NOVEMBER 2006: Justice Brian McGovern rules on the RvR case in the High Court. He states that the embryo outside the womb enjoys no constitutional protection, and that it was not possible for the Court to decide when life begins.

JANUARY 2007: Deirdre Madden's colleague, Dr Tom Moore, requests approval for the use of human embryos in lethal research in UCC. Madden, now Chair of the UCC Ethics Board, begins two-year push to win approval of embryonic stem cell research in the university.

MARCH 2007: Dermot Gleeson is appointed Chairman of UCC's governing body by President Michael Murphy, an advocate of embryonic stem cell research.

MARCH/APRIL 2007: Submissions to the Irish Council for Bioethics showed that 70% of Irish people oppose research on human embryos, while 65% say they would be unwilling to use medical treatments that were developed using embryonic stem cells.

APRIL 2008: The Irish Council for Bioethics (ICB) issue a report mirroring the CAHR report, and calling for embryo research to be legalised in Ireland. An open letter from Irish academics say the ICB opinion has "no sound ethical, medical or scientific basis."

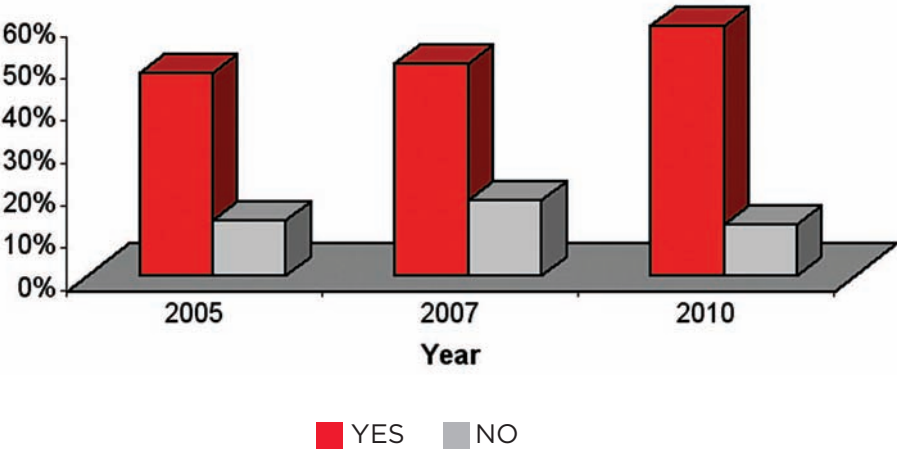
OCTOBER 2008: UCC Ethics Board makes a proposal to begin embryonic stem cell research in the University. The UCC Governing Body, chaired by Dermot Gleeson, votes in favour of embryo research, by a margin of one vote. The Governing Body say they considered the reports of the ICB in coming to their decision.

DECEMBER 2009: The Supreme Court rules on the appeal of the RvR case involving the status of frozen embryos. The court finds that the embryo *ex-utero* currently has no constitutional protection, despite the insertion of the

pro-life amendment, Article 40.3.3, into the Constitution by the people in a 1983 referendum. Several judges refer to the CAHR recommendations, but several also point out that the embryo is deserving of legal protection.

THE POLLS SAY YES TO LIFE

When asked if they favoured legal protection for the human embryo, those who expressed an opinion were in favour by a substantial majority



Polls conducted by Millward Brown

2005-2010: Successive opinion polls show that a consistent and significant majority of the Irish people oppose embryo research and favour giving legal protection to the human embryo from fertilisation.¹

1. Reville William, ‘Killing of embryos in human stem-cell research is wrong’, *Irish Times*, 21 January 2010 <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/sciencetoday/2010/0121/1224262767052.html>

A two-thirds majority of public submissions received by the Commission on Assisted Human Reproduction, the Irish Council of Bioethics, and the Irish Medical Council also take the same view.

JANUARY 2010: Mary Harney says she will bring forward legislation on the human embryo later this year. She repeatedly references the pro-embryo research recommendations of the CAHR and ICB. No reference is made to the wishes of the people.



In December 2009 the Supreme Court rules that the embryo outside of the womb has no constitutional protection. Harney says she will now introduce legislation on the embryo

JOIN THE DOTS

EGE - EU ETHICS GROUP

- Their 1998 and 2000 reports say taxpayers should fund embryonic stem cell research
- EGE member Peter Whittaker helps to form Irish pro-embryo research lobby, the Irish Council for Bioethics

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

EU supports, funds embryonic stem cell research and 7th framework

IRISH COUNCIL FOR BIOETHICS

- Inaugurated by Harney and funded by taxpayers
- Dermot Gleeson becomes Chair
- ICB calls for embryonic stem cell research to take place in Ireland
- Ignores the pro-life result of its own public consultation

MARY HARNEY

- Votes for EU funding of embryo research
- Inaugurates ICB which calls for embryo research to be legal in Ireland
- Suggests research could be permitted on imported embryonic stem cell lines
- Says she will bring forward legislation on the human embryo



DERMOT GLEESON

- Chairs pro-embryo research Council
- Also Chair of UCC Governing Body and casts deciding vote to allow embryonic stem cell research in UCC



UCC BIOSCIENCES INSTITUTE

Funded by the EU, its investigator, Dr Tom Moore, requested approval to begin experiments on embryonic stem cell lines in UCC

UCC GOVERNING BODY

Votes to allow embryonic stem cell research in 2008, heavily influenced by Madden and Gleeson

THE POWERFUL ELITES BEHIND THE PUSH FOR EMBRYO RESEARCH IN IRELAND

EUROPEAN UNION

...funds and carries out
...research under 6th
...work programmes.

EU COMMISSION

EU Research Commissioner Philippe
Busquin says embryonic stem cell
research should be encouraged

MICHEÁL MARTIN

- Votes for EU funding of embryo research
- Appoints Commission with a 20 to 1 majority in favour of embryo research
- Says he is "open" to embryonic stem cell research taking place in Ireland



COMMISSION ON ASSISTED HUMAN REPRODUCTION

- Has an absurd 20 to 1 majority against the right-to-life of the embryo
- It approves embryo research, cloning and embryo destruction
- Key member Dr Deirdre Madden leads push for embryonic stem cell research in UCC
- Mary Harney says she will use CAHR recommendations to produce legislation on the embryo

DEIRDRE MADDEN

- Long time advocate of research on human embryos
- Appointed by Martin & Harney to CAHR and to the Medical Council
- Chair of Ethics Body in UCC. Proposes policy approving embryonic stem cell research.



STEPHEN SULLIVAN

- Aims to set up embryonic stem cell research facility in Ireland
- Brought by Madden to lobby UCC Academic Council
- Sets up Irish Stem Cell Foundation to lobby for embryonic stem cell research

WHO'S WHO

So who are the proponents of embryo research taking part in this choreographed dance of politicians and commissions? The key players are:

MARY HARNEY

In 2003, as Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Harney voted in favour of EU funding for embryo research. Several government TDs and Senators insisted that she had done so without their prior approval, as did a key Dáil Committee - the Joint Committee on Enterprise and Small Business - that had previously voted to oppose the EU Commission's recommendation to fund such research. Defending her vote, Mary Harney said that the European Commission had made a recommendation and "Ireland does not think it appropriate to oppose the Commission."¹



Most revealing, though, was Harney's statement at the time of the vote; namely that embryonic stem cell research could take place in this country in certain circumstances provided that the embryos were not sourced in Ireland.² As we will see, that was the strategy followed by Deirdre Madden to win approval for embryonic stem cell research in UCC.

Minister Harney also inaugurated the Irish Council for Bioethics which was heavily stacked in favour of embryo research. In her role as Health Minister she has also loaded the Medical Council with political appointees who are abortion-friendly and favour embryo experimentation and destruction.

1. Statement by An Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment Mary Harney T.D. to Seanad Éireann regarding the proposal for a Council Decision on Embryonic Stem Cell Research 19 November 2003.

<http://www.entemp.ie/press/2003/191103.htm>

2. Staunton Denis, 'No decision reached on funding stem cell research', *Irish Times*, 4 Dec 2003

MICHEÁL MARTIN

Micheál Martin is currently the Minister for Foreign Affairs and served as Health Minister from 2000-2004. In that position he set up the Commission on Assisted Human Reproduction which was stacked in favour of those who supported embryonic stem cell research.

In 2004 he appointed Deirdre Madden, a leading embryo research advocate, to the Medical Council. The Council's ethical guidelines which expressly forbid embryo research and cloning were considered a target.

In July 2006, in his role as Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Martin voted in favour of EU funding for embryonic stem cell research. He also said that he would be "open" to such research in Ireland.¹ Five EU countries voted against the proposal - Austria, Lithuania, Malta, Poland and Slovakia – despite Martin's assertion that he could not act against the other EU member states.

The Minister told the *British Medical Journal* that: "We have to face up to the challenges of contemporary science, and we have to respect the rights of other member states."²

Perhaps he could have begun with respecting the rights of the human embryo - and the right of the Irish people not to have their taxes used to fund lethal experiments on human life.



1. "Martin 'open' to stem cell research", *Irish Times*, 6 June, 2006

<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2006/0629/1146660094866.html>

2. Watson Rory. "EU agrees to continue funding stem cell research", *British Medical Journal*, 29 July 2006

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1523440/>

DERMOT GLEESON

Dermot Gleeson is a barrister, and served as Chairman of the Irish Council for Bioethics which was inaugurated by Mary Harney in 2003. He is listed as one of the three directors of a new limited company which was incorporated in August 2008 as part of a restructuring of the Council.

Mr Gleeson was a key figure in the approval of research on human embryonic stem cell lines in UCC. As Chairman of the university's Governing Body his was the casting vote in deciding to approve embryonic stem cell research at the university.¹

He served as Attorney General under the Rainbow Coalition of Fine Gael, Labour and Democratic Left. On his advice, the government decided to oppose the claim for compensation made by Donegal woman, Mrs Brigid McCole, who, like thousands of other women, had contracted Hepatitis C from contaminated blood in a scandal that rocked the Blood Bank and horrified the nation. Gleeson's advice to then Health Minister, Michael Noonan, led to the State fighting the courageous and terminally-ill Mrs McCole in the courts until her death.

Gleeson was also Chairman of AIB from 2003, presiding over the bank during a period when its risky and reckless growth subsequently cost the Irish taxpayers billions of euro in bailouts. As AIB Chairman, Gleeson attended the ultra-secretive annual Bilderberg conferences at which Western bankers, major corporations and senior military figures discuss global policy.²



1. 'UCC split over embryonic stem cell research', *Irish Medical Times*, 25 February 2009
http://www.imt.ie/news/2009/02/ucc_split_over_embryonic_stem.html

2. 'Dermot Gleeson', *The Phoenix*, Jan 16 2009

DEIRDRE MADDEN

Deirdre Madden is a lecturer in the UCC Law Department, where her publications are primarily in the area of Medical Law. She is a favourite appointee of Ministers Harney and Martin, who have placed her on numerous committees including the CAHR, and the Irish Medical Council.

Madden is a long-time proponent of embryonic stem cell research. She first outlined her position in her textbook, 'Medicine, Ethics and the Law', published in 2002, where she wrote: "There are very strong reasons for believing that the embryo is not yet a person", and that the value of an embryo's life should be balanced against "the restriction of activities with the embryos that could be of benefit to society through the advancement of medical knowledge in the treatment of disease and disabilities."¹ She recently described US federal funding of embryonic stem cell research as a "very welcome development".² She was appointed by Micheál Martin to the Commission on Assisted Human Reproduction from 2000-2005.

In 2004, she was also appointed by Micheál Martin to the Irish Medical Council. As Chair of the Council's Ethics Committee she directed a review of the Council's ethical guidelines which outlawed embryo research and abortion. Mary Harney subsequently re-appointed Madden for a further five-year term in 2008.

Dr Madden was appointed as Chair of the University Research Ethics Board of UCC in 2006. One of her immediate concerns, according to minutes obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, seemed to be with winning approval for embryonic stem cell research.



1. Madden, Deirdre, 'Medicine, Ethics and the Law', Tottel Publishing, 2002

2. Gantly Dara, 'Where funds will stem from', *Irish Times*, 20 January 2009

<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/health/2009/0120/1232059660918.html>

THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union has played a key role in the push for embryo research in Ireland. The EU Ethics Group's rush to support embryonic stem cell research in 1998 kick-started the campaign, with key players such as Dr Peter Whittaker involved in both the EU's report and the Irish push to experiment on human life.

Two of our most senior Cabinet Ministers - Mary Harney and Micheál Martin - have voted at the EU Council of Ministers to spend Irish taxpayers' monies on embryo research.



The EU is now directly involved in funding and supporting embryonic stem cell research (with your taxes) through the European Commission's Framework programmes. ESTOOLS, an EU Framework 6 Integrated Project, boasts that it "is the largest grouping of human embryonic stem cell researchers in Europe."¹ The EU Framework 7 Programme has allocated €500 million to stem cell research - including the kind that experiments on human embryos.² Former EU Research Commissioner, Philippe Busquin, said that, while countries could continue to choose whether they funded embryonic stem cell research themselves, the EU felt it was important to encourage as much research as possible.³

Several of the larger EU states have adopted measures allowing for embryo research and cloning. Since the passing of the British Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act in 1990, at least 1.2 million human embryos have been deliberately destroyed or used in research in that country.⁴

Some of the key Irish players pushing for embryo research have ties to EU

1. <http://www.eurostemcell.org/related-projects>

2. <http://www.hescreg.eu/index.php?id=9>

3. EU split over stem cell research', BBC News, 10 July 2003

4. Woolf Marie, 'IVF clinics destroy 1M 'waste' embryos', *The Times*, 9 January 2008

bodies – scientific and otherwise. Deirdre Madden has been a member of the Expert Evaluation Panel on Bioethics for the European Commission since 2000; Dermot Gleeson was appointed by the European Commission to act as ombudsman in 2003.

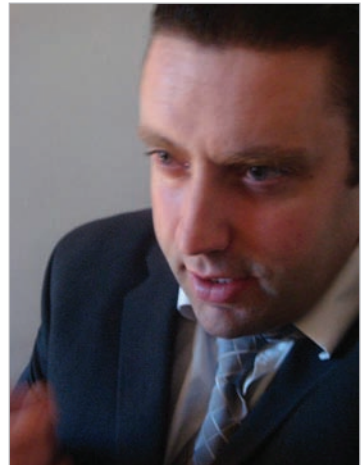
The EU is also a key funding partner of the UCC Biosciences Institute, whose principal investigator, Dr Tom Moore, requested approval to carry out research on human embryonic stem cell lines at the university.

STEPHEN SULLIVAN

According to his own press release, Dr Stephen Sullivan returned to Ireland from the US with the intention of undertaking embryonic stem cell research in this country.¹ He had previously worked with the Harvard Stem Cell Institute, a body hoping to commercially exploit advances in embryonic stem cell research.

Evidence obtained under the Freedom of Information Act shows that one of Sullivan's first significant actions on his return was to collaborate with Deirdre Madden in seeking approval of embryonic stem cell research in UCC.

Dr Sullivan then set up the Irish Stem Cell Foundation, which poses as an independent body while it actually campaigns for legislation to allow for research on human embryos. The foundation's spokespersons and materials repeatedly attempt to downplay the progress being made in ethical adult stem cell research, and the supposedly transparent body is extremely reticent about the source of its



1. <http://www.irishpressreleases.ie/2007/06/05/controversy-as-human-embryonic-stem-cell-researcher-returns-to-ireland-to-discuss-setting-up-a-laboratory/>

funding.

The 2010 policy document from the Irish Stem Cell Foundation supports research on embryos stored following IVF, and Dr Sullivan has, predictably, called for the recommendations of the Commission on Assisted Human Reproduction to be implemented.

THE TAXPAYERS: YOU AND ME

And then of course, there is you and me, the long-suffering taxpayers whose monies have funded these quangos and this push for embryo research, despite the fact that we are, in the majority, opposed to such research.

Is this democracy? Is it even good governance, given not just the duplicity involved to date, but the sheer absurdity of pushing for research which is unethical and clearly not producing results.

Our government levies ever-increasing taxes on the people, and then uses our taxes to fund commissions and quangos which ignore submissions from the people, and tell the government what it wants to hear.

This sort of corruption strikes at the very heart of our democracy. It attempts to use the power given by the people to usurp the wishes of the people. Those pushing for embryo research in Ireland have treated the people of Ireland with utter contempt.

As now revealed, what happened in UCC is a prime example of that contemptuous attitude.



4

WHAT HAPPENED IN UCC



- Embryo experiments in by UCC
What happened behind the scenes
Not for persuasion

EMBRYO EXPERIMENTS IN UCC

In October 2008, the Governing Body of UCC voted to allow human embryonic stem cell lines to be imported and used for experimentation in the university. The policy was approved by the tightest margin of 16 to 15, with Chairman, Dermot Gleeson, reported to have cast the deciding vote.¹

Following the vote, one of the Governing Body's members, the Lord Mayor of Cork, Brian Bermingham, strongly criticised the decision and asked why the vote took place at a time when not all members were present. Phone calls and emails piled into the university from both former students and members of the public who were appalled at what had happened. UCC mathematics professor Des McHale, also a well-known author, said that he was "deeply ashamed of the situation."²

What were the events leading up to the UCC vote on 28 October? It proved difficult to get answers or information from UCC, but documents finally released under the Freedom of Information Act have now given a clearer picture of the careful machinations that went on before the vote.

Both Dr Deirdre Madden and Dermot Gleeson played significant roles in the push to get the go-ahead for embryonic stem cell research in UCC. But it is most important to understand that the strategy adopted by the major players in this controversy was first publicly referred to by Minister Mary Harney some five years previously.

The UCC vote was a significant step for advocates of lethal research on human life. They clearly decided that the best way to get what they wanted was to import embryonic stem cell lines – the actual killing of the human embryo to obtain those stem cell lines would be done in another jurisdiction. And that course of action was first publicly considered by Mary Harney in 2003 when she

1. Culliton Gary, 'UCC split over embryonic stem cell research', *Irish Medical Times*, 25 February 2009 <http://www.imt.ie/news/research-and-education/2009/02/ucc-split-over-embryonic-stem-cell-research.html>

2. Professor "ashamed" of colleagues' stem cell research', *Daily Mail*, 19 February 2009

said it was theoretically possible that a private company in Ireland could seek EU funding for research using imported embryonic stem cells.



Lord Mayor of Cork, Brian Bermingham, strongly criticised the UCC decision to allow embryonic stem cell research to take place in the university

WHAT HAPPENED BEHIND THE SCENES

In 2006, embryonic stem cell research advocate Dr Deirdre Madden was appointed to the Chair of UCC's Research Ethics Board (UREB). Minutes released under FOI show that, under Madden's Chair, the UREB immediately began to develop a draft policy on human embryonic stem cell research.

In fact, minutes of their meeting of 19 January 2007 stated that stem cell research would “appear as a regular Agenda item for the foreseeable future” since Dr Madden said she had been approached by a researcher seeking approval to begin this type of research in the university.

FOI records reveal the researcher to be Dr Tom Moore, an investigator at

the UCC BioSciences Institute. UCC refused to release details of the funding sources for the BioSciences Institute, but its own publicity document acknowledges that the EU is a major sponsor, along with the Wellcome Trust. Dr Moore is a Wellcome Trust Research Fellow in UCC, and the Trust is a leading sponsor of embryo research in the UK.

In an email to Professor Peter Kennedy, dated 9 February 2007, Deirdre Madden suggested that, given the legal uncertainty surrounding embryo research, importing human embryonic stem cell lines might be the best way to proceed. That was precisely what came to pass.

Minutes of the UREB meetings reveal that, in April 2007, Madden invited Dr Stephen Sullivan, the Harvard researcher who came to Ireland for the purpose of setting up an embryonic stem cell research facility, to meet with UCC's Academic Council Research Committee (ACRC).

Also released under FOI, minutes of the Academic Council's subsequent meetings show that at least one member expressed concerns "re ACRC maintaining an objective view on the issue".

Madden and the Ethics Board then agreed to undertake a consultation with UCC academic staff on embryonic stem cell research. As part of the consultation academics were asked to choose between four policy options – with only option 1 favouring a ban on embryonic stem cell research.

In the same month Dermot Gleeson, the Chairman of the pro-embryo research Irish Council for Bioethics, was appointed Chairman of UCC's Governing Body. His nomination was proposed by the university president Michael Murphy who told the *Evening Echo* in October 2008 that: "The advantage to humanity offered by the use of embryonic cells in research over-rides any argument against it."

The minutes of the Ethics Board meeting in September 2007 showed that one of its members, Professor Paul McSweeney, "expressed disappointment that, in his opinion, there had been very little debate at UREB meetings on the ethical issues associated with human embryonic stem cell research". His objections were

ignored. The UREB agreed that the consultation documents to be circulated amongst UCC staff would state that the majority view in the Ethics Board favoured research on human embryonic stem cell lines. The UREB also used the policy paper of the Irish Council for Bioethics as an authoritative source of support for lethal research on human embryos.

In November 2007, Professor Tommie McCarthy, Head of the Department of Biochemistry, wrote to the Ethics Board pointing out that it was “very clear that human embryonic stem cells will have little value in research.” He added that “the breaking news this week (namely that pluripotent stem cells can



Professor Tommie McCarthy called on UCC to maintain its “ethical and moral integrity” by rejecting embryonic stem cell research

be established from human skin cells)” should cause the university to shelve any plans to use human embryos in research, and called on UCC to maintain its “ethical and moral integrity”.

The results of the consultation with UCC academic staff showed that the majority of his colleagues agreed with him. But what happened next was not only arrogant and high-handed; it was a downright dishonest and distorted representation of the facts.

The minutes of the Academic Council meeting of October 2008, also released under FOI, give the breakdown of responses to the consultation document circulated amongst UCC academic staff on stem cell research.

The UCC academics were asked to choose between four policy options:

Option 1 would ban embryonic stem cell research.

Option 2 would allow embryonic stem cell lines to be imported for research.

Option 3 would allow the importation permitted in Option 2 and would also allow research on IVF embryos.

Option 4 would allow everything in Option 3 and would also permit creating human embryos for lethal experimentation.

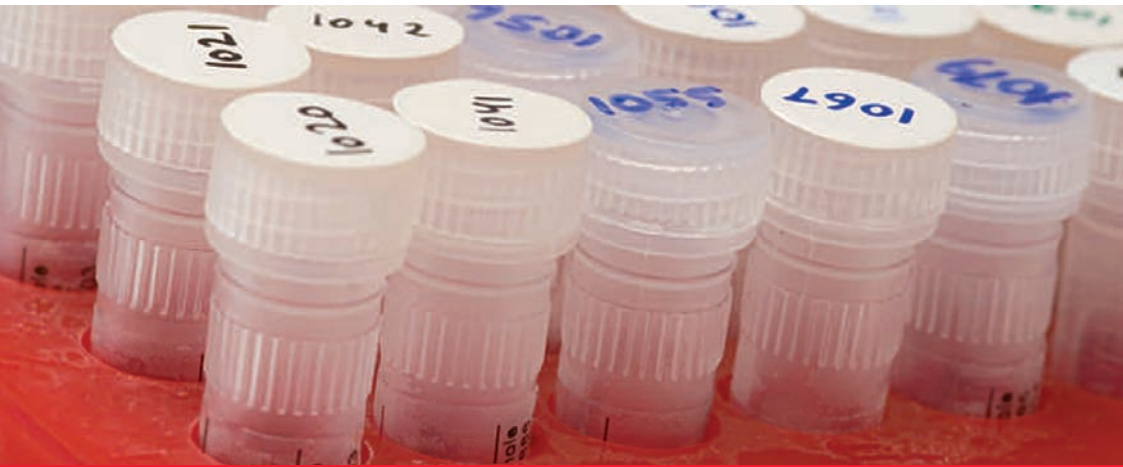
A majority of staff - thirty-six out of sixty-seven academics – favoured a ban on embryonic stem cell research, which was option 1 of the policy options.

A majority of UCC staff favoured a ban on embryo research, but the Ethics Board brazenly put a different spin on the results.

This result clearly didn't suit the Ethics Board who brazenly put a completely distorted spin on the results. They claimed that, since six staff members who supported embryonic stem cell research had chosen more than one of options 2, 3 or 4, each pick should be counted as a separate vote.

In other words, if you choose option 1 you got one vote. If you chose option 2, 3 and 4 you got three votes in support of embryonic stem cell research. This, the Ethics Board claimed, then gave a majority to the pro-embryo research view. The integrity of the entire process was entirely compromised as a result of this spurious vote tally, and the interpretation of the Ethics Board was clearly at odds with what had actually happened.

In his letter to the Academic Council, Professor Paul McSweeney opposed the UREB policy favouring embryo research. He further stated that he “had reservations about aspects of the process through which the University Research Ethics Board came to this point”, and that he disagreed “with the way in which the results of the UCC-wide consultation were compiled and reported.”



“Destructive human embryonic stem cell research is unethical, has delivered nothing, is probably soon to be redundant, and is supported by some for reasons far divorced from science.”

Professor Paul McSweeney to UCC's Academic Council.

He added that “Destructive human embryonic stem cell research is unethical, has delivered nothing, is probably soon to be redundant, and is supported by some for reasons far divorced from science.”

Professor McSweeney’s words went unheeded, as so often happens when an agenda, not science or reason, is driving a push for change. The Academic Council agreed that UCC should adopt a policy on embryonic stem cell research, and referred the matter to the Governing Body.

In a revealing letter, obtained under FOI, Dermot Gleeson, now Chair of the Governing Body, praised Deirdre Madden for her “good work” on this issue. The stage had been set, and the players primed.

NOT FOR PERSUASION

At the meeting of the Governing Body of UCC on 28 October 2008, Chairman Dermot Gleeson said that it would be unlikely that members of the Governing Body with strongly held views would persuade each other on the issues involved. Despite this, Dr Deirdre Madden (who was not a member of the Governing Body) attended the meeting to pitch for a policy permitting embryonic stem cell research. Her advice was that it would be lawful, given a loophole in the law, to import human embryonic stem cell lines for experimentation.

Clearly this was a tactical move. Public reaction had stalled the government’s hand, and, impatient for progress with their agenda, the strongest supporters of embryo research had now decided to push forward by interpreting the law to suit themselves. It was both a challenge and a come-hither to the government.

At the meeting, Madden pointed to the report of the Irish Council for Bioethics favouring embryo research as a source of support for beginning experiments on human life in UCC. No-one seems to have pointed out the obvious: that Dermot Gleeson, the Chair of the Governing Body, was also a member of the ICB when it issued that result, and that Dr Madden was, of course, a leading campaigner against the right-to-life of the human embryo.

As the next chapter explains, the Governing Body also included a representative of some of the world’s largest and most powerful pharmaceutical companies - companies invested heavily in embryonic stem cell research.

Having listened to Deirdre Madden and deliberated, the Governing Body cast their votes - and decided by a 16 to 15 majority to approve embryonic stem

cell research in UCC. Dermot Gleeson, as Chairman, had the casting vote.¹

You literally couldn't make this up.

UCC has since confirmed to the Life Institute that permission has been given to a researcher in the university to import human embryonic stem cell lines for experimentation. That researcher is likely to be Dr Tom Moore who set the ball rolling with Deirdre Madden when he requested permission to import embryonic stem cell lines for lethal research.



Dermot Gleeson, as Chairman of the UCC Governing Body, had the casting vote at the meeting, and he voted in favour of embryonic stem cell research

In a ironic twist, Dr Moore has subsequently joined the University Research Ethics Board - as a member of the Animal Experimentation Ethics Committee.

The university denied other information requested under FOI including

1. As before: 'Professor "ashamed" of colleagues' stem cell research', *Daily Mail*, 18 February 2009

the membership of the UCC Embryonic Stem Cell Advisory Sub Committee, or the minutes of the meetings of that Committee. They also refused access to information regarding funding, citing sensitivity.

That's interesting, since, as we'll now see, funding and the pursuit of profit is a major factor in the push for embryo research worldwide.

5

FOLLOW THE MONEY



- The profit motive
Big pharma, little embryos
No strings attached?

THE PROFIT MOTIVE

Money is often the motive behind the desire to legalise experiments on human life, and, when major pharmaceutical companies are involved, the amount of money at stake can be simply staggering.

Dr Tom Okarma is CEO of Geron, a biotechnology company that has invested exclusively in embryonic stem cell research. In an interview with *Stanford Medicine Magazine* he argued that “no moral dilemma” existed when experimenting on human embryos. Significantly, he also concluded that adult stem cells hold less commercial promise than their embryonic counterparts.¹

That’s because adult stem cells usually come from the patient’s own body, thus avoiding any need to purchase expensive patented embryonic stem cell lines. In a testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee, Dr Jean Peduzzi-Nelson argued that it was “a superior business plan to have a mass-produced product, such as embryonic/fetal/cloned stem cells, that can be sold nationwide and has



Geron Corporation - a biotechnology company investing exclusively in embryo research - says more money is to be made from embryonic stem cell research than from ethical adult stem cell research

1. Baker Mitzi, ‘Stem Cell Harvest’, *Stanford Medicine Magazine*, Fall 2004
<http://stanmed.stanford.edu/2004fall/okarma.html>

patentable intellectual property.” She added that “the most profitable, not the best, treatment for people is being promoted”, and that “the main reason for the current emphasis on human embryonic stem cells and cloning is money.”¹

Moreover, if pharmaceutical companies were able to use embryonic stem cells in therapies, the treatment would leave the patient dependent on costly anti-rejection drugs. Adult stem cell therapies, again because they are usually derived from the patient, do not require such ongoing medications.

Those are the reasons that companies like Geron pursue embryonic stem cell research, despite the absolute lack of success to date. If embryonic stem cells could be manipulated into a product which biotech companies could patent and sell, huge profits could possibly ensue.

For some, the lure of success and money is a heady combination, and sadly, when greed overcomes ethics, the right-to-life of the human embryo can be trampled into the dust.

In an article entitled “Mixing Business with Stem Cells”, author Neil Munro explains that “the media coverage has often missed the pecuniary interests of the scientists who have been prominent in supporting government funding for research into the use of stem cells from human embryos. While such scientists are often prominent faculty members at prestigious universities and public research institutions, they are also often board members and shareholders of biotechnology companies which stand to make hefty profits from embryonic stem cell research.”

Mr Munro concludes that: “They are, in short, both disinterested scientists and very interested entrepreneurs.”²

That’s not to say that companies investing in adult stem cell research don’t hope to make profits, clearly they do. But those profits don’t arise from the destruction of human life, and the therapies being developed are actually helping patients right now.

1. Testimony of Dr Jean Peduzzi-Nelson, Department of Physiological Optics, University of Alabama, to U.S. Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Science, Technology, and Space, 14 July 2004

2. ‘Mixing Business with Stem Cells’, *National Journal*, July 2001

BIG PHARMA, LITTLE EMBRYOS

Three of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the world are Pfizer, GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), and GE Healthcare. Their policies supporting embryo research are not publicly well-known, but even less well-known is their connection to the Governing Body of UCC which voted in favour of allowing embryonic stem cell research in 2008.^{1 2 3}

All three companies, Pfizer, GSK, and GE, belong to a representative body called PharmaChemical Ireland – and this body has a seat and a vote on the Governing Body of UCC.⁴ In October 2008, when the Governing Body voted to allow embryonic stem cell research, the representative of PharmaChemical Ireland on the UCC body was Julie O'Neill. Despite several requests for information, PharmaChemical Ireland refused to say how their representative voted at this crucial meeting.

However, we do know that these companies had recently undertaken some expensive investments in unethical stem cell research which destroys human embryos. Despite the failure of this lethal research to provide any useful results, Pfizer, GSK and GE bucked the investment trend away from embryo research when they announced major investments in programs involving experiments on embryonic stem cells.

Following the passage of the UK Human Fertility and Embryology Act (which allows human cloning and the creation of hybrid human/animal embryos), Pfizer announced a £40 million investment in a stem cell facility in the UK.⁵

GE Healthcare - a \$17 billion unit of the General Electric Company -

1. http://www.pfizer.com/research/research_clinical_trials/stem_cell_research.jsp

2. <http://www.gsk.com/policies/GSK-on-cloning-technologies-and-stem-cell-research.pdf>

3. http://www.ge.com/citizenship/performance_areas/products_services_rdstem.jsp

4. http://www.pharmachemicalireland.ie/Sectors/PCI/PCI.nsf/vPages/About_us~members-directory?OpenDocument

5. 'Pfizer opens £40 million stem cell research lab in Cambridge', *Varsity*, 21 November 2008
<http://www.varsity.co.uk/news/1124>

announced funding for a multi-year alliance with Geron Corporation in June 2009. They said the program would develop and commercialize products derived from human embryonic stem cells.¹

In July 2008, GlaxoSmithKline announced that they had entered into a five-year, \$25 million-plus collaborative agreement with the Harvard Stem Cell Institute, which focuses in particular on embryonic stem cell research.² Just months previously, Dr Stephen Sullivan, a researcher at the Harvard Stem Cell Institute, had been brought to UCC by Dr Deirdre Madden to persuade the Academic Council to support embryonic stem cell research at the university.



As the *Boston Globe* pointed out, the Harvard initiative was never intended to be purely a research enterprise. “The business school, the school of

1. Wang, Shirley S. ‘Geron, GE Healthcare Strike Stem-Cell Deal’, *Wall Street Journal*, 30 June 2009
Geron press release

<http://www.geron.com/media/pressview.aspx?id=1181>

2. Colen, BD, ‘GlaxoSmithKline and Harvard Stem Cell Institute announce major collaboration’
Harvard Science, 24 July, 2008

government, the law school, and the divinity school will be invited to participate, as part of an effort to understand the ethical, social, and business dimensions of the new technology, according to Steven E. Hyman, Harvard's provost", the *Globe's* Gareth Cook wrote.¹

A 2008 *Bloomberg* article further noted that the Harvard Stem Cell Institute had already received some \$70 million in private funding.² The Institute planned to become a direct provider of stem cell therapies; if they succeeded it would bring handsome profits for investors.



US President, Barack Obama, has opened up funding for companies investing in lethal experiments on human embryos. Irish campaigner, Dr Deirdre Madden, argues that embryonic stem cell research should be funded by the taxpayer

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1. Cook Gareth, 'Stem cell center eyed at Harvard' *Boston Globe*, 29 February, 2004
http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2004/02/29/stem_cell_center_eyed_at_harvard/
 2. John Laueran and Brian Kladko, 'Glaxo Gives Harvard \$25 Million for Stem Cell Study', *Bloomberg*, 24 July, 2008
<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aFl5sOcXjDxo>

The amount of money involved in promoting embryo research is staggering - and its proponents are keen to grab what they can from the taxpayer. When U.S. President, Barack Obama, announced in March 2009 that he would begin federal funding of embryonic stem cell research, he was applauded by the Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO), which represents drugmakers and for-profit laboratories. As the *Washington Examiner* pointed out, BIO had spent \$7.7 million on lobbying alone in the previous year, compared, for example, with \$4.9 million spent by the American Petroleum Institute. In Missouri, biotech giant Stowers Institute contributed \$29 million to help win passage of a ballot measure providing subsidies for embryonic stem cell research.¹

The reason for this huge spending on lobbying is simple: the pursuit of taxpayer funds for embryonic stem cell research, especially at a time when private investors are switching to adult stem cell research, would win billions for enterprises willing to experiment on human embryos.

In the U.S. some \$522 million in taxpayer funding has been allocated to fund embryonic stem cell research since 2002.² Lobbyists hope to massively increase that federal funding, forcing taxpayers to pay for these experiments - something that meets with the approval of Irish campaigner Dr Deirdre Madden.

Additional taxpayer funding, in the US and in Ireland, would also be a boon to the global pharmaceutical companies who have already invested enormous sums in lethal embryo research. They are all too eager to see a return on their investment.

1. Carney Timothy P., 'Obama injects politics - and profit - into science', *Washington Examiner*, 11 March 2009

2. From NIH "Estimates of Funding for Various Research, Condition, and Disease Categories (RCDC)". <http://report.nih.gov/rcdc/categories/PFSummaryTable.aspx>

NO STRINGS ATTACHED?

Major pharmaceutical companies which support embryonic stem cell research, such as Pfizer and GSK, have given substantial funding to UCC - and to other Irish colleges - in the past decade. While this funding is obviously welcome, the question needs to be asked: Does it come with a price tag? And does that price include the lives of human embryos?

It doesn't look good when UCC is less than open about releasing information on funding, when PharmaChemical Ireland won't say how it voted on UCC's embryo research policy, and when lobbyists for embryonic stem cell research such as the Irish Stem Cell Foundation are flying a false flag, and being secretive about funding.

In an October 2009 article in the *Irish Times*, Claire O'Connell wrote that,

"Funding arrangements in Ireland now actively link basic academic science with industry partners - some partnerships support innovative and early-stage research in universities that the industry partners couldn't otherwise carry out, while others seek to harness academic expertise more directly from the outset for specific customer needs."

Such collaborations may be the direction in which research is headed but when scientists and researchers become directly involved in seeking the commercial benefits of research, there exists a real danger that ethics may take a back seat, with disastrous consequences for the protection of human life.

To prevent that happening, we need a legal and ethical framework that protects human life from conception. But as we'll now see, the opponents of such an ethical framework are adept at both secrecy and spin.

6

SECRECY AND SPIN



- False fronts: The Irish Stem Cell Foundation
Why the secrecy about funding?
Neither ethical nor honest
- The role of the media

FALSE FRONTS:

THE IRISH STEM CELL FOUNDATION

In 2007, Harvard researcher Dr Stephen Sullivan returned to Ireland to set up a facility which would use human embryonic stem cells for research. In a press release issued by Sullivan at the time he said that his research would use stem cells taken from embryos “left over from the IVF process”.

Sullivan said the embryos would “never become a foetus, let alone a baby or a human being.”¹

As Dr Sullivan would no doubt be aware, his remarks were a denial of basic science which, as every school textbook shows, has long revealed that life is a continuum from conception.

Dr Sullivan wasn’t long returned to Ireland when he was hot-footing down to meet with Deirdre Madden in UCC. Madden brought him along for a special meeting with the UCC Academic Council Research Committee on 30 April 2008 to build support for her push for embryonic stem cell research in the university. Documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act suggest that at the meeting, Madden, as Chair of the UCC Ethics Board, strongly recommended a new policy on embryonic stem cell research. Sullivan agreed.

In the same month, Sullivan popped up to say a few supportive words at the launch of the pro-embryo research report from the Irish Council for Bioethics and then went on to launch the Irish Stem Cell Foundation (ICSF) - which markets itself as a body whose “primary objective is to educate about stem cells”. But its actions - and its website - reveal that the primary objective of the foundation is, in fact, to promote embryonic stem cell research. Much of the “information sheets” on the site are thinly disguised promotions of embryo research. Ethical and effective alternatives, such as adult stem cell research, are repeatedly downplayed.²

Disputing the success of medical treatment using adult stem cells seems

1. <http://www.irishpressreleases.ie/2007/06/05/controversy-as-human-embryonic-stem-cell-researcher-returns-to-ireland-to-discuss-setting-up-a-laboratory/>

2. <http://www.irishstemcellfoundation.org>

to be a particular focus of the Irish Stem Cell Foundation. It repeatedly makes the false claim that only a “small number of diseases” are being treated with adult stem cells, and turns a conveniently blind eye to the fact that no patients at all have been successfully treated with embryonic stem cells.

None of this should be remotely surprising since Sullivan is the editor of a “practical handbook” on experimenting on human embryonic stem cell lines, and trained in the Roslin Institute where Dolly the Sheep was cloned.¹ In April



Much of the “information sheets” on the ISCF website are thinly disguised promotions of embryo research

2010, the ISCF openly declared its support for embryonic stem cell research, stating in its policy document that IVF embryos should be used for this purpose.² Sullivan also told the *Sunday Business Post* that the Foundation would would try

1. Sullivan Stephen, Cowan Chad A, Egan Kevin, *Human Embryonic Stem Cells: The Practical Handbook*, Wiley, 2007

2. ‘Irish public policy and human embryonic stem cell research - A policy document by the Irish Stem Cell Foundation’, April 2010
<http://www.irishstemcellfoundation.org/docs/policy.pdf>

to lobby legislators to drive policy on this issue. (Yet the Foundation is now registered as a charity, and charities are not permitted by the Revenue to engage in political lobbying.)

The Irish media, as ever, ignores the patently obvious motives behind the ISCF's activities and allows Sullivan to market the Foundation as a purely educational body. The ISCF has been given an astonishing amount of free publicity by RTÉ, the *Examiner*, the *Sunday Business Post*, and others, who offer Dr Sullivan ample time to sell his agenda, with no questions asked.



The Irish Stem Cell Foundation markets itself as an independent authority, but its chief objective seems to be the approval of embryonic stem cell research in Ireland. It's also very secretive about the source of its funding

WHY THE SECRECY ABOUT FUNDING?

The source of the ISCF's funding has certainly never been queried by Irish journalists - and information as to who exactly is footing the bill for the Foundation's activities is denied to the public. Despite repeated requests from the Life

Institute for information on the individuals or corporations funding the Foundation, no information was forthcoming.

Letters, email and telephone requests for information failed to produce any response. Questions regarding funding were deleted from the ISCF's Facebook page, and those asking the questions were blocked. When the Life Institute did finally manage to speak to Dr Sullivan on the phone, he would only say that his Foundation was supported by "vested interests", whatever that means. Further phone calls and letters went unanswered.

Why the secrecy? Surely a foundation that markets itself publicly as an independent expert body should be open to answering questions on funding.

Is it the case that the "vested interests" are big pharmaceutical companies with a financial interest in embryonic stem cell research? Or do the Foundation's founders or their associates hope to gain financially from the introduction of embryo research into Ireland?

We don't know. And we can't know because the Irish Stem Cell Foundation is acting in a suspiciously secretive manner about the sources of its funding. But we do know that, very often, the pursuit of money is certainly a motivation for embryonic stem cell supporters. Dr Sullivan was previously engaged as a researcher in the Harvard Stem Cell Institute. As explained in Chapter 5, the Institute, which is backed by the mega pharmaceutical Merck amongst others, hopes to profit commercially from undertaking embryonic stem cell research: an objective it clings to despite the fact that it has delivered nothing.

According to an interview with the *Sunday Business Post*, Sullivan is now working with the Sloan Kettering Institute - another key funder and supporter of embryonic stem cell research in the U.S.¹ Clearly the Foundation is deeply committed to legalising lethal experiments on human embryos in Ireland.

1. Mitchell Susan, 'Stem cell research opportunity slowed by lack of legislation', *Sunday Business Post*, 18 October 2009

NEITHER ETHICAL NOR HONEST

Supporters of embryonic stem cell research always seem anxious, even desperate, to downplay the success of adult stem cell therapies in treating serious medical conditions. The Irish Stem Cell Foundation is no exception. Dr Sullivan has claimed that: “there are only a small number of diseases (less than 10) that can currently be effectively treated with stem cells.”¹

That is simply not the case, according to Dr. David Prentice, an internationally-recognized expert on stem cell research and cloning.



Dr David Prentice, internationally-recognized expert on stem cell research, points out that studies show benefits from non-embryonic stem cell therapies for patients with 73 different conditions. That number is zero for embryonic stem cell therapies.

He points out that there are published peer-reviewed studies with results showing benefits from non-embryonic stem cell therapies for patients with 73

1. Golden Paul, ‘Stem cell research in Ireland’, *Business and Finance*, Life Sciences Review, Issue 3 2009.

different conditions, including breast cancer, Parkinson's disease, spinal cord injuries, Multiple Sclerosis, and blindness.

"The list of 73 applications is compiled from peer-reviewed articles, where observable and measurable benefits to patients have been documented. These clinical trials are a necessary step toward formal FDA approval and what is expected of new, cutting-edge medical applications," said Dr Prentice

"The fact remains," he continued, "that 73 medical conditions have been clinically shown to improve when treated with adult-stem cell therapies. That number is zero for embryonic stem cell therapies."

In 2008, the Journal of the American Medical Association released a review paper showing the therapeutic benefits of adult stem cells for patients for a variety of diseases and conditions. Researchers at Northwestern University did a rigorous analysis of publications related to adult stem cell treatments for autoimmune and cardiovascular diseases. They limited their analysis only to those specific diseases, and they excluded traditional adult stem cell treatments related to cancers or blood diseases. Their analyses of the outcomes showed that in dozens of instances adult stem cells were improving the health of patients.¹

An April 2010 article in the same peer-reviewed journal showed that more than 50,000 patients are now being treated with adult stem cell therapies each year.²

It makes sense that if you want to promote embryo research you need to downplay the success of adult stem cell research. It doesn't make that strategy ethical or honest. Nor is it ethical to set up a foundation with the primary objective of legalising stem cell research in Ireland, and then market that foundation as an independent, disinterested party.

1. Burt RK, Loh Y, Pearce W, Beohar N, Barr WG, Craig R, Wen Y, Rapp JA, Kessler J, 'Clinical applications of blood-derived and marrow-derived stem cells for nonmalignant diseases', *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 27 February 2008

2. Gratwohl A, Baldomero H, Aljurf M, et al, 'Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplantation, A Global Perspective', *Journal of American Medical Association*, 28 April 2010
<http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/303/16/1617>

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

Stem cell research can be a fairly complex area to understand, and explaining the crucial differences between adult and embryonic stem cell research is an important part of public awareness.

Given the recent breakthroughs in ethical stem cell research, it would not be unreasonable to expect the media to explain clearly that the successful stem cell treatment stories which have made headlines in recent times were as a result of adult stem cell research – in each and every instance.

That has certainly not usually been the case. Instead, the Irish people are treated to current affairs programmes where claims as to the expected (albeit entirely unrealised) benefits of embryo research are breathlessly predicted.

To compound this effect, when breakthroughs involving ethical adult



The media has hyped up embryonic stem cell research while ignoring the advances being made in adult stem cell research

stem cell research are reported, the reportage invariably omits to clarify the situation, leaving it up to the reader to guess whether the stem cells were obtained from adults or by killing human embryos.

In a 2006 interview, Dr Peter Hollands, a leading UK researcher in the stem cell biology/clinical embryology field, said that embryonic stem cell researchers have taken advantage of the public ignorance about stem cells, and

pointed at the media as a cause for the widespread confusion.¹

A recent example is a March 2010 report by the *Irish Times* with the heading “Crohn’s disease sufferers to benefit from stem cell trial in Galway”. Nowhere in the entire article is it clarified that it is non-embryonic stem cells that are being used in those trials. A piece on stem cell research on 12 October 2010 in the same paper gave the impression that only embryonic stem cells offer the hope of treatment for “a range of degenerative disorders from Parkinson’s disease to multiple sclerosis”, when in fact those disorders are already being treated by adult stem cells.

To be fair to the *Irish Times*, a review of their reportage in 2009 and 2010 shows that there is some attempt at balance and that some coverage is given to scientists who argue that embryonic stem cell research is unethical and has failed to produce any benefits.

Other Irish newspapers, such as the *Sunday Business Post*, the *Examiner* and the *Independent*, are less inclined to be impartial or objective, however. In November 2008 the *Independent* wrote approvingly of UCC’s decision to begin embryonic stem cell research, claiming that: “For the millions of people suffering from incurable illnesses who see stem cell research as their lifeline to a cure, the study of science in Ireland took a huge step in the right direction this week.”²

It would be hard to beat that for pure, emotive, propaganda.

The *Sunday Business Post*, meanwhile, seems to have taken on the role of an unquestioning promoter of the agenda of the Irish Stem Cell Foundation, running a series of uncritical articles giving a platform to Dr Stephen Sullivan’s push to have embryo research legalised in Ireland. The *Examiner* has conducted itself along much the same lines.

In 2003, at the EU Council of Ministers, Minister Mary Harney voted in

1. Smith, Peter J, ‘UK Researcher: Embryonic Stem Cells Have Never Been Used to Treat Anyone and no Plans Exist to do so’ *LifeSiteNews*, 24 August 2006

2. ‘Miracle or murder?’ *Irish Independent*, 1 November 2008
<http://www.independent.ie/national-news/miracle-or-murder-1516109.html>

favour of funding embryonic stem cell research. RTÉ's *Morning Ireland* on 25 November 2003 featured a report on the vote claiming that "since human embryonic stem cells were first cultivated in a laboratory, the sense of excitement about their life-saving potential has been almost drowned out by the furious ethical debate surrounding it."

The station's *Questions and Answers* programme dealt with the issue the following Monday. The panel of five guests included just one – the then MEP for Connaught/Ulster Dana Rosemary Scallon – who opposed the EU funding of embryonic stem cell research.

RTÉ flagship current affairs programme, *Prime Time*, has addressed stem cell research several times. It is prone to giving half the story, suggesting for



David McConnell, the TCD professor who has spoken publicly in favour of embryonic stem cell research, is a former director of the Irish Times Trust

example that embryonic stem cells are more useful without clarifying that research using those stem cells has produced no useful treatments.

RTÉ also tends to under-report that patients who have received

treatments using embryonic stem cells are likely to develop tumours. In February 2009, a boy who was treated in Moscow with foetal stem cells for a rare genetic disease developed brain and spinal tumours. The controversy surrounding this case went largely unreported in the Irish media.¹

The same media regularly presents embryo research campaigners (such as Drs Deirdre Madden and Stephen Sullivan) as unbiased experts, when they are, in fact, no such thing. Plugs for lethal forms of embryonic stem cell research in the Irish media are often accompanied by references to actors Christopher Reeve or Michael J Fox, with the false suggestion that killing embryos could or would help their conditions. This sloppy, dishonest reporting has led to confusion amongst the public in regard to stem cell research.

Less than honest reporting has led to confusion amongst the public in regard to stem cell research.

Ethicist Wesley Smith noted that “advocates of ESCR preyed on the scientific and ethical illiteracy of the general public to support the massive funding of this speculative research.” He quotes Ronald D.G. McKay, a stem cell researcher at the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, who said in relation to claims that embryonic stem cell research could lead to cures for Alzheimer’s that, “To start with, people need a fairy tale. Maybe that’s unfair, but they need a story line that’s relatively simple to understand.”²

1. ‘Stem cell “cure” boy gets tumour’, *BBC News*, 18 February 2009
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/7894486.stm>

2. Smith Wesley, ‘Embryonic Stem Cell Research Has Lost the Battle, California Was Its Waterloo’, *First Things*, 12 January 2010

This gap in public knowledge has been filled in part by awareness projects such as Youth Defence’s advertising and information campaigns, but without these efforts it is certain that the public perception of embryonic stem cell research would be that lethal research on human embryos brings benefits to mankind. Similarly, the Irish media’s role in denying the humanity of the human embryo is nothing short of shameful.

The media’s role may be explained in part by the personnel involved. Several high-profile advocates of embryonic stem cell research have also enjoyed powerful positions in some of Ireland’s largest media corporations.

Dermot Gleeson is a former Director of Independent News and Media PLC. David McConnell, the TCD professor who has spoken publicly in favour of embryonic stem cell research, is a former director of the Irish Times Trust, while Professor Dervilla Donnelly of the CAHR is also a former Governor of the Irish Times Trust and Director of Irish Times Limited.

Whatever the media’s motivations, the repeated successes of therapies using adult stem cell research are becoming harder for them to downplay or ignore. On 2 August 2010, the *Associated Press* wrote a lengthy report on stem cell research which was carried in many major newspapers, including the *New York Times*. The headline read “Adult stem cell research far ahead of embryonic”, and the article went on to describe some of the tremendous results seen by doctors and patients who have used adult stem cells in successful medical treatments.¹

Truth has a way of making itself known in the end.

1. Ritter Malcolm, ‘Adult stem cell research far ahead of embryonic’, *Associated Press*, 2 August 2009

7

WHERE THE FUTURE LIES



- Moving on: ethically and scientifically
- Making Ireland a centre of excellence

MOVING ON:

ETHICALLY AND SCIENTIFICALLY

There is nothing progressive about biomedical research which seeks to destroy human life. And thankfully, the desire to preserve scientific ethics has led the most brilliant scientists to find alternatives to embryonic stem cell research; alternatives which not only preserve life, but actually offer real hope.

Dr Shinya Yamanaka was an assistant professor of pharmacology when he looked at a human embryo through a microscope in a friend's fertility clinic.

"When I saw the embryo, I suddenly realized there was such a small difference between it and my daughters," said Dr Yamanaka, a father of two and now a professor at the Institute for Integrated Cell-Material Sciences at Kyoto University. "I thought, we can't keep destroying embryos for our research. There must be another way."¹

For the next eight years he sought that ethical alternative - and he found it with induced pluripotent stem cells. His team of researchers successfully reprogrammed adult skin cells to give them the properties of human embryonic stem cells without using an actual embryo

His breakthrough caused a leading Irish government expert to write that the advances made by Yamanaka and his colleagues strongly reinforced the case for banning embryonic stem cell research.²

Professor Patrick Cunningham, the chief scientific adviser to the Irish government, wrote that: "In 2006, Takahashi and Yamanaka (*Cell*, Vol 126, 663-676) demonstrated for the first time that cells from differentiated tissues could be reprogrammed to become pluripotent. These are known as iPS cells or induced pluripotent stem cells. This discovery, and the work which followed it, has raised

1. Fackler Martin, 'Risk taking is in his genes', *The New York Times*, 11 December 2007
<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/11/science/11prof.html>

2. Cunningham, Patrick, 'Advances in stem-cell research may resolve ethical issues', *Irish Times*, 4 April 2009
<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/opinion/2009/0422/1224245127531.html>

the prospect of being able to achieve with iPS cells everything that was thought possible with ES cells harvested from embryos.”

He pointed out that the breakthrough supported the case for banning embryonic stem cell research.

“For those who regard harvesting of embryonic stem cells as ethically unacceptable, this prospect strongly reinforces the case for legally prohibiting research on embryonic material,” wrote Professor Cunningham.

The breakthrough with induced pluripotent stem cells was tremendous. By adding a few genes to a normal skin cell, for example, the skin cell is reprogrammed to behave as flexibly as an embryonic stem cell - without using any human embryos.

Scientists hope the process will lead to relatively inexpensive and effective therapies, and that these flexible cells can be made for any patient by using that patient’s own cells and reprogramming them. They also hope that, because the patient’s own cells are used, the problems of tumour formation and rejection that has plagued embryonic stem cell research will not arise. In other words iPS cells may contain all of the flexibility of embryonic stem cells without any of the associated problems, and without killing embryos.

The iPS development is considered so promising that, as described in Chapter 1, it caused Professor Ian Wilmut to turn his back on embryonic stem cell research and cloning.

It also prompted Dr James Thomson, who first isolated embryonic stem cell lines (and led progress in iPS research), to say that the breakthrough would make the ethical row about embryonic stem cell research, “just a funny historical footnote”. He added that: “If human embryonic stem cell research does not make you at least a little bit uncomfortable, you have not thought about it enough.”¹

1. Kolata Gina, ‘Man Who Helped Start Stem Cell War May End It’, *New York Times*, 22 November, 2007 <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/22/science/22stem.html>

The progress made in ethical stem cell research now means that induced pluripotent stem cells and adult stem cells are increasingly the focus of scientists and investors. One of the frontrunners in the adult stem cell space is Osiris Therapeutics, who were paid \$130 million up front by biotech Genzyme to develop two new adult stem cell treatments, with another \$1.3 billion to be paid out when potential milestones are reached.¹

As a June 2009 article in *Fortune* magazine pointed out: “Researchers are far closer to commercializing drugs based on adult stem cells than any product based on embryonic stem cells.”²



Dr James Sherley, biomedical engineer at Boston Biomedical Research Institute, told *Wired* magazine that embryonic stem cell research “was now passé”

1. ‘Genzyme and Osiris Form Adult Stem Cell Mega-Partnership’, *Wall Street Journal*, 5 November, 2008.

2. ‘Kattan Anna, ‘Adult stem cells are a promising market’, *Fortune*, 16 June, 2009
http://money.cnn.com/2009/06/16/technology/adult_stem_cell_therapy.fortune/index.htm

In that article, journalist Anna Kattan also noted: “In fact, adult stem cells are currently the only type of stem cells used in transplants to treat diseases, such as cancers like leukemia.”

Dr James Sherley is a biomedical engineer at Boston Biomedical Research Institute. He recently told *Wired* magazine that human embryonic stem cell research “was now passé.”¹

“The most advertised property of human embryonic stem cells, their potential to produce any tissue type in the body, is also their worst failing. The tissue types that they always produce are tumors”, he continued. And he noted that federal funding for embryonic stem cell research will merely “put more resources in the hands of scientists who have been selfishly promoting dead-end research since 2001.”

The *Fortune* magazine article pointed out that since adult stem cell research was producing results where embryonic stem cell research lagged behind, some analysts had noted that “investors should heed the differences.”

Fortune quoted Robin Young, a medical industry analyst from RRY Publications, who “estimates that gross sales of adult cellular therapies will be well over \$100 million in the United States this year.” By 2018, he says, “stem cell therapy revenues could grow to \$8.2 billion.”

“Indeed, several pharmaceutical companies are now taking notice of research advancements in adult stem cells - and their proximity to reaching the market,” the article continued.

It also noted that Debra Grega, the executive director of the Center for Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine at Case Western Reserve University believes that: “Adult derived cells are the ones that have been studied for the past 10 to 15 years and are ready for prime time.”

“Large pharmaceutical companies are now wanting to get into the adult stem cell therapeutic area,” she continued. “That indicates to me that there is

1. Keim Brandon, ‘With Bush Ban Gone, Stem Cell Research Will Proliferate’, *Wired*, 9 March, 2009 <http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2009/03/obamastemcells/#ixzz0tYLyaYPj>

enough safety and enough efficacy that they are willing to put money in."

As well as putting money into adult stem cell research, investors are leaving embryo research in their droves. Ethicist Wesley Smith has described what happened in California as "the Waterloo for embryonic stem cell research."

In 2004, California approved Proposition 71, a measure allowing the state

There are currently 2155 clinical trials involving adult stem cell transplants worldwide - and just 4 trials involving embryonic stem cells. Doctors and scientists have voted with their feet.

to borrow \$3 billion for embryonic stem cell research. The measure received support from pharmaceutical companies (naturally), Silicon Valley tycoons and Hollywood celebrities anxious to post their liberal credentials. The cost of the borrowing is estimated to total \$7 billion when interest payments are included.

Five years later, when this costly investment in embryonic stem cell research had provided no therapies, no progress, and no hope, the Californian *Investor's Business Daily* noted:

"The California Institute for Regenerative Medicine, the state agency created to, as some have put it, restore science to its rightful place, is diverting funds from ESCR [embryonic stem cell research] to research that has produced actual therapies and treatments: adult stem cell research. It not only has treated real people with real results; it also does not come with the moral baggage ESCR does."¹

The article pointed out that it was embryo research advocates "who have

1. Editorial, 'California's Proposition 71 Failure' *Investor's Business Daily*, 1 December 2009
<http://www.investors.com/NewsAndAnalysis/ArticlePrint.aspx?id=51787070>

politicized science and stood in the way of real progress. We are pleased to see California beginning to put science in its rightful place”.

The ultimate test for any form of research is, of course, the number of registered approved clinical trials currently taking place worldwide. This information is now easily available on www.clinicaltrials.gov – which currently records more than 90,000 trials in 174 countries.

That website reveals that as at 1 October 2010 there were 2155 adult stem cell transplant trials versus a paltry 4 embryonic stem cell transplant trials.

It's quite remarkable. The medical community has simply voted with their feet - and they have almost completely abandoned embryonic stem cell research.

We should insist that the Irish government abandons it also - and make Ireland a centre of excellence for the type of research that is producing results: ethical adult and iPS stem cell research.

MAKING IRELAND A CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

In August 2010, Ciarán Finn-Lynch, an 11-year-old boy originally from Co. Monaghan, came home from hospital following successful pioneering surgery to rebuild his windpipe using his own stem cells.

Ciarán was born with a condition which leaves sufferers with a very narrow windpipe, making breathing difficult. Doctors in Great Ormond Street Hospital in London used stem cells from his bone marrow to build up a donor windpipe and ensure the organ was not rejected.¹

It was the latest in a long line of success stories for adult stem cell re-

1. 'Landmark stem cell surgery offers new windpipe transplant hope', *BBC News*, 6 August 2010
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-10899275>



Ciarán Finn-Lynch, whose windpipe was rebuilt using his own stem cells, with his parents at Great Ormond Street hospital in London. Photograph: Lewis Whyld/PA

search, which is providing therapies and treating patients right now. Other recently published examples include a breakthrough by University of Minnesota researchers led by Dr. John E. Wagner and Dr. Jakub Tolar, who successfully used adult stem cells from donor bone marrow or donor umbilical cord blood to treat the distressing and previously incurable skin disease, recessive dystrophic epidermolysis bullosa.

In a paper published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in August 2010, Wagner and Tolar's team reported that they had treated a total of ten children with the most aggressive forms of the disease and that all of the children had responded to the therapy to varying degrees, and most were in better health, overall.¹ Dr Wagner said: "To understand this achievement, you have to understand how horrible this disease actually is. From the moment of birth, these

1. Wagner John E, Tolar Jakub et al, 'Bone Marrow Transplantation for Recessive Dystrophic Epidermolysis Bullos', *New England Journal of Medicine*, 12 August 2010

children develop blisters from the slightest trauma which eventually scar. They live lives of chronic pain, preventing any chance for a normal life. My hope is to do something that might change the natural history of this disease and enhance the quality of life of these kids.” His colleague, Dr Jakub Tolar, added: “Patients who otherwise would have died from their disease can often now be cured. It’s a serious treatment for a serious disease.”

“Patients who otherwise would have died from their disease can often now be cured. It’s a serious treatment for a serious disease.”

Dr Jakub Tolar on adult stem cell treatment for the deadly skin disease RDEB

These are the success stories that patients right across the world need. They are the success stories that ethical science has produced.

So we, the people, can at this juncture choose to do the right thing. And we can insist that Mary Harney does likewise, because what she does in this regard, she does in our name.

We must choose to protect human life – and to concentrate our energies on making Ireland a centre of excellence for ethical stem cell research.

In fact, partly because our pro-life ethos has pushed us towards ethical research, Ireland is now fast becoming a leader in adult stem cell research.

In a recent *Business and Finance* magazine article Stephen Simpson, a director of Science Foundation Ireland, identified tissue repair using adult stem cells as a research area with significant potential for direct applications of stem cells, and cited the treatment of spinal cord injuries as an example.¹

1. Golden Paul, ‘Stem cell research in Ireland’, *Business and Finance*, Life Sciences Review, Issue 3 2009 <http://www.businessandfinance.ie/index.jsp?p=444&n=446&a=1681>

A focal point of adult stem cell research in Ireland is the Regenerative Medicine Institute or REMEDI at NUI Galway, which studies stem cells isolated from bone marrow and their therapeutic applications. The institute's two main therapeutic targets are arthritic and cardiovascular diseases, with the former being at a more advanced stage of development.

Business and Finance reported that REMEDI has been working with Smith & Nephew on the development of stem cell therapy for the treatment of osteoarthritis of the knee, and that the joint venture is progressing well.

NUI Maynooth is also leading projects in ethical stem cell research. One project involves looking at why the body does not reject transplanted adult stem cells, a question that has puzzled scientists since normally the human immune response clears out anything it sees as foreign, such as bacteria and viruses.

The NUIM team hopes to confirm conclusively that adult stem cells introduced to a new host do survive without causing an immune system attack.

With so much progress being made in ethical stem cell research, the government would do well to heed the recent warning from one of the world's leading stem cell experts, Irishman, Dr Colin McGuckin, who is a professor of regenerative medicine and a pioneer in stem cell research.

As part of a joint UK-US team, Dr McGuckin grew liver tissue from stem cells derived from umbilical cord blood, a huge breakthrough with positive implications for many patients. He described the youthful stem cells found in cord blood as the building cells of the body, and said they had potential in the treatment of strokes, leukaemia and certain cancers.

But, in 2008, Professor McGuckin closed his laboratory in the UK and moved to the Cell Therapy Research Institute in Lyon where he established the world's biggest institute devoted to cord blood and adult stem cell research. He said that UK universities and funding agencies were prioritising embryonic stem cell research above work with adult stem cells, despite the more immediate clinical benefits offered by the latter.

Speaking to the *Times*, he said he was leaving because he had to put his

patients and staff first. "The bottom line in my vocation is to work with patients and help patients and unfortunately I can't do that in the UK," said Dr McGuckin who added that France offered a "much better environment" in which both to "cure and treat more people" and to "do good work".¹



Irishman Dr Colin McGuckin, who made a huge breakthrough when his team grew a mini-liver from cord blood stem cells, says ethical stem cell research is underfunded

"(France) is very supportive of adult stem cells because they know that these are the things that are in the clinic right now and will be more likely in the clinic," he said. "A vast amount of money in the UK from the Government has gone into embryonic stem-cell research with not one patient having been treated, to the detriment of (research into) adult stem cells, which has been severely underfunded."

His view was supported by Dr. Anthony Hollander, a professor of

1. Corbyn Zoe, 'You would barely know adult stem cells exist', *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 23 October 2008. <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=404027>

rheumatology and tissue engineering at the University of Bristol, who said that in the UK "we desperately need more funding for adult stem cell research because with these cells we really can make a difference to patients' lives, and we can do it now, not in ten years' time as is promised for embryonic stem cells."¹

So let's send a message to Mary Harney. Let's tell her that we should listen to experts like Professor Colin McGuckin and attract the brightest and best



Dr. Anthony Hollander says more funding is needed for adult stem cell research, which is providing real hope for patients right now

to Ireland to engage in adult stem cell research. We should become a centre of scientific and medical excellence while retaining our pro-life ethos.

That's progress we can all live with.

1. Corbyn Zoe, 'You would barely know adult stem cells exist', *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 23 October 2008. <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=404027>

8

DECISION TIME



- What will Mary Harney do next?
And are we going to let her get away with it?

WHAT WILL MARY HARNEY DO NEXT?

On 15 December 2009, the Irish Supreme Court issued its judgment in the RvR case.

The case involved a woman and her husband who had undergone IVF treatment, during which three of their embryos were frozen. The couple had since separated, and the woman asked for custody of her three remaining embryos, arguing they had a right to life under Article 40.3.3 of the Constitution of Ireland.

When the case was first heard in the High Court in 2006, Justice Brian McGovern said (despite evidence to the contrary) that it was not possible for the court to decide when unborn life begins, and that the frozen human embryos were not protected under Article 40.3.3. He ruled that while the 1983 amendment protects the life of the "unborn", voters were not thinking of an unborn child outside of the womb when they approved the wording. His judgment was widely criticized, and Mrs R appealed his ruling to the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court upheld the High Court ruling and said that the Constitution does not afford protection to the human embryo prior to implantation. However, several judges pointed out that the human embryo was deserving of respect, with Justice Adrian Hardiman noting that other European countries had enacted laws based precisely on respect for such embryos, including a limit on the number of embryos which may be created in the IVF process.

The Supreme Court judges criticised the government for what it described as its failure to enact laws to regulate fertility treatment in Ireland.¹ Their ruling has given Mary Harney a real opportunity - whether she will use it for good or to cause harm remains to be seen.

The Minister had previously cited her desire to await the result of the

1. Carolan Mary, "Disturbing" failure to enact laws on fertility treatment criticised', *Irish Times*, 16 December 2009. <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2009/1216/1224260762881.html>

RvR case as a reason for delay in bringing forward legislation on the human embryo outside of the womb. Since the ruling was clearly a blow to the right to life of the human embryo, the Minister immediately announced that legislation would now swiftly follow.¹

In a written answer dated 3 February 2010 to a question from Independent TD, Finian McGrath, regarding stem cell research, Mary Harney referenced the recommendations of the Commission on Assisted Human Reproduction supporting embryo research and said that her department would draft legislation to govern assisted human reproduction and stem cell research.²

Harney and others have argued that protecting the human embryo from conception would ban IVF, but that's simply not true. Leaving aside the fact that there are a great many ethical and practical problems with IVF (not least that it is intrusive, expensive, has a high failure rate, and creates ethical problems where alternatives such as NAPRO technology cause none) other jurisdictions have successfully dealt with this matter.

An example is the law passed by the Italian Parliament in 2004 governing IVF. It says that a maximum of three eggs can be fertilised at any one time, and that all embryos thus fertilised must be transferred to the uterus simultaneously, giving them all a chance of life.

The Italian law also bans the freezing and/or eugenic screening of human embryos and forbids any lethal experimentation on human embryos.

The law prohibits surrogate motherhood, and sperm or egg donation, and ensures that embryos already frozen before the legislation was passed would be stored until used by their parents or given for adoption.

1. 'Abott Alison, 'Ireland to regulate embryonic stem cells', *Nature*, 17 December 2009
<http://www.nature.com/news/2009/091217/full/news.2009.1148.html>

2. Written answer from Mary Harney TD to Finian McGrath TD on embryonic stem cell research
<http://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2010-02-03.1390.0>

AND ARE WE GOING TO LET HER GET AWAY WITH IT?

Mary Harney can bluster as much as she wants, but the fact remains that it is entirely within the power of this government to protect the human embryo from the moment of conception. Furthermore, the government must be directed by the majority of Irish people who do not want to see the deliberate destruction of embryonic human life happen in Ireland, or elsewhere.

The Minister may wish to use the recommendations of the CAHR and



The last word: Life begins at conception, it deserves protection from that point - without exception

the ICB as justification for her actions, but, as this report has revealed, doing so would be a shameful con-job: an attempt to use political power to deceive the people, from whom, according to our Constitution, all power is derived.

It's worth reminding ourselves that Article 6 of that Constitution states:

“All powers of government, legislative, executive and judicial, derive, under God, from the people, whose right it is to designate the rulers of the State and, in final appeal, to decide all questions of national policy, according to the requirements of the common good.”

Here's where this report becomes an exhortation. Don't finish this page without resolving to do something about the flagrant abuse of democracy and trust which has driven the push for embryo research in Ireland.

Speak up. Make your voice heard.

Call An Taoiseach right now on (01) 6194020 (email: taoiseach@taoiseach.gov.ie) and tell him that he must insist that Minister Mary Harney moves to protect the human embryo from the moment of conception - without exception.

Then call all your local TDs and local representatives and tell them the same. Become part of the solution. Defend the human rights of every person from conception.

In her speech to Seanad Éireann defending her EU vote in favour of funding embryo research in 2003, Mary Harney said that there needed to be a “democratic debate involving the whole of society” regarding any use of the human embryo.

In the first instance, of course, she is wrong. The right-to-life of every human being cannot be negated or granted by Mary Harney or by anyone else - our obligation is only to acknowledge this intrinsic right, and to protect it.

But the facts also show that every quango set up by the Minister and the government did its level best to ensure a democratic debate on this issue did not happen - and that the wishes of the people were ignored.

You can change that. Or you can allow your wishes, your values and Ireland's pro-life ethos, to be beaten down by a tiny, powerful, elite.

We now know who is behind the push to legalise embryo research in Ireland. It's time for us to push back.

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