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Mrs. Greiser

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The Use and Research of Stem Cells

If given a chance and properly researched, embryonic stem cells could possibly lead to the next great human healer of Generation X. While little to no one opposes adult tissue stem cell research and few are concerned about core blood stem cells. When mentioned in a crowd, embryonic stem cells will generally raise a few eye brows. Stem cell research is currently limited in scientific advancement in many countries due to governmental regulations. Religious beliefs are probably the greatest factor for the slowing of stem cell research (stemcells.nih.gov). For the purpose of comparison, let's take a look back in time when getting blood from someone else was a controversial issue in medicine.

The human body requires a certain amount of blood within it to survive. If the blood in the body drops below a particular level, it can be dangerous or even fatal. The body can regenerate blood slowly on its own but the quickest way to raise the blood level is by injecting blood into the body from an outside source. Some religious beliefs prohibit this action. The resolution to this controversy was simple; if getting blood from an outside source is against your beliefs then you can't be forced to receive it. Nor is anyone required to give blood (Drugs and Cosmetics Act1940). It's a matter of choice!

Some of those that took blood from outside sources in the late 1970s and early 80s survived whatever reason for doing so, only to find out later that they could - and some would –

die due to the complications of AIDS (hivinsite.ucsf.edu). A disease they contracted from tainted (untested at that time) blood received years before. Then it repeated again in the 1990s with HCV (hepatitis C). Now what of the people that refused the blood (due to religious beliefs) and survived their travesty? What was once thought of as foolish religious beliefs, from the forbidden, doesn't seem as such now. Some lived because of choice while others died because of it. The great thing is, they had choice!

So even though we live in a democracy, where majority rules and the squeakiest wheels get the most lube, I believe it should be about choice! If your religious beliefs forbid you from researching or using stem cells, than it should be your right to refuse it. However, if the practice or use of stem cells is not frowned upon by your god or gods than you should be allowed to do so freely. Who's to say that the use of stem cells couldn't result in the cure-all or even the next great cancer for those who once benefited from them? Maybe only the ones who have the choice to study them long and hard will have the answers or maybe the god/s knew it all along?

<http://mahasbtc.aarogya.com/index.php/history-of-blood-transfusion/law-and-transfusion>

<http://stemcells.nih.gov/policy/Pages/Default.aspx>

<http://hivinsite.ucsf.edu/InSite?page=kb-07-02-09>