

Inquiry brief



STEM CELL RESEARCH In modern politically charged climate, there is a broad spectrum of mainstream views on stem cell research. There is near universal agreement among scientists that stem cell research is an important and complex endeavor that offers the promise of treating, and perhaps curing, million patients who suffer from serious degenerative disorders.

Simultaneously, religious and bioethical communities oppose stem cell experimentation due to faith-based principles and old-fashioned ideas. I chose the topic of stem cell research because in contemporary context it is considered a very controversial political, ethical and public problem due to its social, ethical and medical implications. My research question is as follows: do medical advancements and biomedical progress outweigh the controversial ethical and moral acts made in stem cell research? My argument is that medical and social benefits stem cell research brings to humanity the past progress and future development of the research. For the purpose of the analysis and argument on stem cell research, three academic sources were selected.

The article by L. Leydesdorff and I. Hellsten “ Metaphors and Diaphors in Science Communication: Mapping the Case of Stem-Cell Research” in Science Communication examine the term “ stem cell” and how it varies in different contexts of research, applications and policy debates. From the very beginning, authors emphasize the pressing importance of stem cell research, indicating that the United States President George W. Bush addressed the political and social issue of stem cell research, specifically, embryonic stem cell research and it was the first time an American President had gone on national television in a special broadcast on a bioethical issue (Leydesdorff & Hellsten, 71). Later in November 2001, Bush convinced Congress to ban

reproductive and therapeutic cloning of stem cells (Leydesdorff & Hellsten, 71). Authors points out that these restrictive policies have greatly affected both scientific research in the United States and the public debate over stem cell research. More specifically Leydesdorff and Hellsten focus on communication of stem cell research to general public and the importance of it to the latter. From the authors' perspective, it is evident that stem cell research will receive the fullest reception of society.

In her book “ Stem Cell Research” Lillian Forman provides a thorough analysis of almost every aspect around stem cell research, from its medical potential and future benefits to policy problems associated with research implementation. Forman explains in scientific terms what stem cell research constitutes and the difference between embryonic stem cells and adult stem cell development. The position of author regarding stem cell research is embedded in the statement made by University of Wisconsin scientist James Thompson: there are 400, 000 frozen embryos in the United States, and a large percentage of those are going to be thrown out, and it makes sense that it is a better moral decision to use them to help people than just to throw them out. Stem cells can be transplanted into the body to treat diseases and injuries: from Parkinsons disease and diabetes, to Alzheimer's disease and stroke.

The purpose of book “ Stem Cell Wars” by Eve Herold is to provide a clear and understandable explanation of what stem cell research is, to answer why it is a debatable policy and to demonstrate what modern science is capable of. Among three sources selected for stem cell research analysis, Herold's book provides the most distinctive and fundamental analysis of its moral and ethical implications. From the critical perspective, Eve Herold takes a clear

scientific side in this debate, arguing that opponents of stem cell research have managed to deeply entangle it in millions of people's minds with the practice of abortion (Herold, 68). Herold indicates that since the first stem cell was isolated at the University of Wisconsin, moral opponents have carried on a massive campaign of misinformation, to the extent that millions of Americans are either deeply confused about what the research entails or actually believe that mainstream scientists are immoral and unethical.

Author's final argument states that stem cells have the potential to treat or even cure the more than 100 million Americans who suffer from an array of illnesses and conditions from heart disease to spinal cord injuries.

Stem cell research received extensive attention from publicists, academics, scientists and political analysts. Therefore, the main challenge in literature search was to find reliable and adequate materials that not only provide authors' position on the debate, but also conduct thorough analysis on the issue from multiple perspectives. I believe Eve Herold's book is a primary example of an ideal academic resource for this research. Another obstacle during the research was that some of the literature on stem cell research is either too biased, particularly religious articles and publications, or too technical and thus difficult to understand without medical background and knowledge.

WORKS CITED

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