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Funding stem cell research

Dennis Coday | Jul. 13, 2009 NCR Today

The story of National Institutes of Health guidelines for funding of stem cell research may have escaped your notice last week. In a nutshell:

> The draft guidelines allowed the use of federal funds for embryonic stem-cell research only on embryos created for reproductive purposes at in vitro fertilization clinics and no longer needed for that purpose. They set standards for voluntary informed consent by those donating the embryos, and said no NIH funds would be given for research that did not meet the standards.
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> The final guidelines, however, set up an "alternative pathway" for approval of funding of research involving embryos donated before the new guidelines took effect or involving stem-cell lines developed in foreign countries. A working group made up of about 10 scientists and ethicists will look at each such application on a case-by-case basis, Kington said, to determine whether it meets "the core principles of voluntary informed consent."
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> Like the draft, the final guidelines specifically ban funding for "research using human embryonic stem cells derived from other sources, including somatic cell nuclear transfer, parthenogenesis and/or IVF embryos created for research purposes."
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> Also prohibited is funding of research in which stem cells "are introduced into nonhuman primate blastocysts" or research "involving the breeding of animals where the introduction of human embryonic stem cells or human-induced pluripotent stem cells may contribute to the germ line."

The NIH recieved more than 49,000 comments [1]about the guidelines during a monthlong period of public comment. But apparently as many 30,000 of these comments were disregarded, the NIH said itself, because those responses were "deemed not responsive to the question put forth."

NIH acting director Dr. Raynard S. Kington explained: "We did not ask them whether" to fund such research, "but how it should be funded."

The pro-life communtiy said Kington and the NIH were being "disingenuous" and "not responding to what the American people want [2]."

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