

Despite debate, stem-cell research surges

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More than four years ago U.S. President George Bush severely limited public funding for stem-cell studies but now such spending is at a record high.

The National Institutes of Health estimate more than \$37 million in federal money was spent last year for stem-cell research, up more than 60 percent from 2004, The Wall Street Journal reported Tuesday.

Bush, in 2001, decided to limit public spending for such research to 60 stem-cell lines already removed from embryos. The 60 line estimate proved high, with only about six lines now in regular use. Most of the rest proved useless or are held in foreign nations and can't be accessed, the Journal said.

Stem cells are deemed extraordinarily valuable in fighting or curing many diseases since they can form nearly any part of the human body, including heart muscle or brain neurons. The cells are taken from human embryos in a process that destroys the embryo.

But last year NIH grants and contracts supported about 154 research projects involving the administration-approved stem cell lines, the newspaper said. Some of the funding is going to facilities that grow stem cells.

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