

# Stem cell research from an ethical point of view

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Stem cell research and the potential use of human embryonic stem cells in clinical therapy is a controversial issue which splits both scientific and public opinion. The current conflict over embryonic stem cells throughout the world deals particularly with the ethical implications of this promising, but delicate subject and the scientific manipulation of human life in its early stages of development. It is a symbolic struggle over the whole future of developmental biology – over how we will proceed with a wide range of research on human development.

Alternative methods for gaining embryonic stem cells such as the Altered Nuclear Transfer (ANT) method developed by William B. Hurlbut, M.D., a member of The President's Council on Bioethics in Washington, D.C., are considered important steps toward embryonic stem cell research.

It is in this context that the new Springer book *Stem Cells, Human Embryos and Ethics: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* provides insight into this recent debate from several relevant fields. A medical and biological angle dealing with new technological possibilities in medical research and putative clinical therapy is presented as well as an ethical point of view including philosophical and theological approaches regarding the moral status of human embryos.

The various chapters of the book focus on one main problem: Is it acceptable from an ethical point of view to use stem cells from human embryos for scientific research and clinical therapy? And what are the weaknesses and strengths of various opinions and positions when they

are critically evaluated? Moreover the book discusses several sub-problems strongly related to this topic, i. e. when does any individual human being begin or at what stage development does a human organism become entitled to the moral and legal protection which we give to the life of human adults?

Based on a two-year research project led by editor Lars Østnor, professor of systematic theology at MF Norwegian School of Theology in Oslo, the book is a comprehensive collection of papers covering all major aspects of the ethical debate presented in an unbiased way. Instead of presenting just on opinion like many monographic books on stem cell research ethics do, the various chapters all together give a multifaceted and balanced treatment of the subject allowing readers to examine the opinions of both religious and scientific scholars side by side. The seventeen chapters of the book *Stem Cells, Human Embryos and Ethics: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* include updated contributions from international respected scholars such as William B. Hurlbut and Sir Anthony Kenny.

"I am of the strong opinion that the debate going on in many countries concerning stem cell research, and especially the use of human, embryonic stem cells, will profit substantially from a sufficient overview of the different aspects relevant for an ethical evaluation," said Østnor as a reason for editing this book.

Source: Springer

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