

Deal considered in U.S. stem cell debate

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As President Bush vows to veto any bill allowing federal funding of embryonic stem cell research, some Republicans are reportedly considering a compromise.

The New York Times said the Congressional Republicans -- including Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist -- are considering alternative legislation promoting new, unproven methods of obtaining stem cells without destroying embryos.

Such a bill might represent a compromise between a bill passed by the House to expand federal financing for stem cell research and the president's insistence to permit federal funding only for studies on existing embryonic stem cell lines.

The House bill permits federal financing for studies on embryos left over from fertility treatments and has majority support in the Senate.

The House proposal would set aside taxpayer money for animal studies that might lead to methods of developing human embryonic stem cell lines.

James Battey, chairman of a stem cell task force within the National Institutes of Health, told the Times scientists currently know of no way to derive human embryonic stem cells without destroying embryos.

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