



A Pro-Life Religious Outreach Newspaper

Stem Cell Research Breakthrough Vindicates Opposition to Embryo Killing

After years of struggle in opposing the killing of embryos for the sake of their stem cells, pro-life concerns have been vindicated by the discovery that adult stem cells can be reprogrammed to a state that has all the features of embryonic stem cells.

Two scientists, Dr. Shinya Yamanaka of Kyoto University and James Thomson of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, in late November published studies describing this breakthrough in the medical journals *Cell* and *Science*.

Dr. Yamanaka was able to convert skin cells from a 36 year-old woman into induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs), and Thomson used cells from a newborn baby. The technique they used introduced four genes into the skin cells which reprogrammed them into the less specialized state of pluripotent cells.

These cells were "patient matched," meaning they could be transplanted into a donor without the body rejecting them. Another advantage, according to Thomson, is that it can be easily replicated in any lab across the world. "People didn't know it would be this easy," he said.

Fr. Thomas Berg, executive director of the Westchester Institute, a Catholic research institute, commented: "Ever since the debate of embryo-destructive stem cell research began in earnest, we've known that the best answer to the ethical impasse would be one that allows the search for stem-cell related cures to go forward without harming or destroying embryonic human life in the process. We now have that solution."

There are some problems yet to be resolved. Since researchers disrupt the DNA of the skin cells to begin the process, there is a potential for causing cancer in the cells. This may mean that the cells would not be used for medical transplants for patients with diabetes or Parkinson's. On the

other hand, "the use of viral vectors that integrate into the DNA of the reprogrammed cells" may be a technique that can be avoided with further research, according to Maureen Condic, associate professor of neurobiology and anatomy at the University of Utah. It may not be necessary to use the cancer-associated gene.

Richard Doerflinger, associate director of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said regarding pro-life concerns, "I think this is something that would be readily acceptable.... It's a win for science and for ethics. I think this is a wonderful advance for basic research in stem cells and maybe some day for regenerative medicine."

The National Catholic Bioethics Center also had a positive response: "Such strategies should continue to be pursued and strongly promoted, as they should help to steer the entire field of stem cell research in a more explicitly ethical direction by circumventing the moral quagmire associated with destroying human embryos."

President Bush, who has held firm in opposing federal funding of embryo-killing research, was pleased at the scientist's breakthrough. White House spokesman Tony Fratto in a public statement said, "By avoiding techniques that destroy life, while vigorously supporting alternative approaches, President Bush is encouraging scientific advancement within ethical boundaries.... The President believes medical problems can be solved without compromising either the high aims of science or the sanctity of human life."

Commenting on the storm of criticism President Bush has received ever since his August 2001 decision opposing any further killing of embryos for their stem cells, Charles Krauthammer in a Washington Post article (11/30/07) said, "Rarely has a president--so vilified for a moral stance--been so thoroughly vindicated.... History will look at Bush's 2001 speech and be surprised how balanced and measured it was.... The moral disquiet...that George Bush forced the country to confront helped lead him and others to find some ethically neutral way to produce stem cells. Providence then saw to it that the technique be so elegant and beautiful that scientific reasons alone will now incline even the most willful researchers to leave the human embryo alone."



Photo courtesy of LifeNews.com

News Note

Hibernians To Increase Pro-Life Focus

The Irish-American group, the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), which has been consistent in its pro-life support, plans to expand its pro-life outreach.

At a December 28 dinner in Massachusetts, the group's president, Jack Meehan announced that they have the opportunity to "expand our efforts to combat the barbarism of abortion." He urged members to "stand up and speak out as never before in defense of human life."

Meehan suggested "practical and material support" by contuning to help expectant mothers by aid to pregnancy

help centers such as Birthright and others.

In an article in *Irish Voice*, Michael Cummings, archivist of AOH, explained, "What we want to do is to demonstrate that we can provide support and resources for those women who are faced with problem pregnancies or with difficult choices--to defend the right of the unborn by giving the practical assistance that those women need."

In a letter to the more than 300 divisions of AOH, Meehan stressed that "The defense of unborn life is part of the defense of human rights and human dignity."

“Reclaiming Fatherhood” Conference Educates About Men and Abortion

At the end of November, the first national conference addressing how men deal with past abortions was held in St. Mary’s Cathedral in San Francisco, cosponsored by the Archdiocese and by Knights of Columbus. The two-day conference, entitled “Reclaiming Fatherhood,” included education and research on men’s involvement and response to abortion, healing and forgiveness, and spiritual resources. Four real-life testimonies were presented. Some 200 persons attended and nine countries were presented.

Knights of Columbus Supreme Knight Carl Anderson said: “As an organization of lay men that has a strong history and commitment to life, we think it is very important to highlight the issues faced by those fathers whose children are aborted. There are three victims of every abortion, the child and both of his or her parents, and it is our hope that this conference will be the beginning of a ministry within the Church to these fathers, who grieve the death of their unborn child in isolation and silence.”

Since *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortion and guaranteed women a right to privacy, men have been denied any rights regarding their unborn children. One result of this is a culture confused about the role of men as provider and protector of women and children. Although there has not been sufficient research on men and abortion, the research that exists indicates that most men feel they must submit to the mother’s decision and hide their own feelings. Suppression of their experience of the realities of abortion can lead to a variety of side-effects: mistrust, anxiety, depression, anger, grief, isolation, sexual dysfunction or substance abuse. Since men often don’t admit or realize they are suffering from an abortion, they don’t seek help even though they are in great need.

The San Francisco Conference was an important step in helping to create more awareness of the impact abortion has on men. It provided training and education for clergy and counselors to help them identify and approach men suffering in this way. There is a need to help men who are post-abortive to realize they are not alone and help is available. For every woman who has an abortion there is a man who has lost his fatherhood.

The National Office of Post-Abortion Reconciliation and Healing (NOPARH) organized the event. Speakers included Warren Williams, author of *Fatherhood Lost* and *Fatherhood*

Aborted; Tom Golden, author of *Swallowed by a Snake: The Gift of the Masculine Side*; and Fr. Martin Pable, author of *The Quest for the Male Soul*.

Kevin Burke, associate director of Rachel’s Vineyard Ministries and a pastoral associate of Priests for Life, commented, “The reality is that men are involved in 95% of all abortion decisions, and they are profoundly impacted by their participation in the abortion of their child.... The majority of men encourage, manipulate and even force their girlfriends, partners or wives to abort. Many other men physically and/or emotionally abandon the mother of their child when they learn she is pregnant.... Often the man may rationalize that abortion is in the best interest of the mother and deny her post-abortion grief.



Photo courtesy of MenandAbortion.info

“An important part of healing for many men begins with an agonizing repentance of their role in the abortion procedure and the failure to protect mother and baby from harm,” Burke continued. “The act of humility opens the door for them to acknowledge that they have also lost a son or a daughter. This recognition gives them permission to examine how this loss has impacted their lives, how it has injured their father’s heart, and encourages them to reach out for reconciliation with God and their child on the journey to healing, peace and restoration in Christ.

“On the other end of the spectrum, there are those men who have an instinctive desire to prevent the mother of their child from having an abortion. They do everything they can to offer support to care for both mother and baby,” Burke pointed out. “If they are powerless to prevent the death of their son or daughter, they typically experience serious depression, rage and grief following an unwanted abortion that can be turned inward in self-destruction or acted out in numerous unhealthy ways, including drug/alcohol/gambling addictions, anger management issues, pornography, etc. Such men need immediate counseling and an effective emotional and spiritual healing process....

Some of the resources available for post-abortive men are the Rachel’s Vineyard Retreats which are offered in cooperation with diocesan family life offices and Project Rachel; The Fatherhood Forever Foundation; the web site MenandAbortion.info; and the book *Redeeming A Father’s Heart*, by Kevin Burke, David Wemhoff and Marvin Stockwell.

Studies Reveal Abortion Relates to Pre-Term & Low-Weight Births

Several researchers have concluded that women who have one or more abortions markedly increase their risk of giving birth to a premature or low-weight baby in subsequent pregnancies.

According to Dr. Richard E. Behrman of the Institute of Medicine, the premature birth rate in the U.S. was 40% higher in 2004 than it was in 1980.

Scientists from Virginia Commonwealth University examined 45,500 mothers giving birth and found that women who had at least one prior abortion were almost three times as likely to have a low-weight baby and 70% more likely to give birth prematurely; women who had two previous abortions were five times as likely to have a low-weight baby and a premature birth was twice as likely; with three or more abortions a woman increased the risk of low-weight birth by nine times and a premature birth was three times as likely.

Researchers Brent Rooney of Canada and William Robert

Johnston of Texas, in a joint letter to the *Journal of American Physicians and Surgeons*, asserted that prohibiting abortion would reverse the trend toward premature births and reduce medical costs. They pointed to the experience of Poland which banned abortion after the fall of the communist government. United Nations data showed that rates of premature birth, maternal mortality and infant mortality dramatically fell within a few years after its abortion rate declined by 98%. Within just two years, 1995-1997, Poland’s pre-term birth rate dropped by 41.8%; the maternal mortality by 41.4%; and the infant mortality by 25% (UNICEF data).

A compilation of 58 studies published in the *Journal of Reproductive Medicine*, October, 2007, revealed findings of significantly higher premature and low-weight births among women with prior surgical abortions. A study of RU 486 abortions found the same result.

Bulletin Inserts

March 2- “Tragically, a person will abort with the hope of salvaging their relationship, but the toxic aftereffects of abortion are like a radioactive seed planted in the heart of the relationship that will, at varying speeds, kill the relationship.” Kevin Burke of Rachel’s Vineyard Ministries and Priests for Life

March 9 – Planned Parenthood performed 264, 943 abortions in 2005, an amount equaling nearly 20% of all U.S. abortions. Abortion procedures make up nearly a third of Planned Parenthood clinic income. While the number of abortions has declined substantially in the U.S., Planned Parenthood’s share of the nation’s abortion business has steadily increased, making it the largest abortion chain in the country as well as the nation’s biggest abortion advocate. NRL News, December, 2007

March 16 - “The cloak of silence surrounding abortion has left couples...struggling alone to understand and respond to relationship challenges in the aftermath of an abortion. An essential first step toward change is open acknowledgment of the dark potential of abortion to disrupt individuals’ lives and wreak havoc on intimate bonds.” Priscilla K. Coleman, Ph.D.

March 23 – The delicate buds of spring, bursting with new life, will soon appear on trees and flowers. Easter brings another, even more precious form of new life. As we value and protect these types of new life, let us act with the same reverence and awe toward the miracle in the gift of each new human life.

March 30 - “Scientists have made ordinary human skin cells take on the chameleon-like powers of embryonic stem cells, a startling breakthrough that might someday deliver the medical payoffs of embryo cloning without the controversy.” Associated Press article, 11/20/07

April 6 - The production of embryonic-type stem cells from ordinary human cells, like skin cells, “represents a tremendous scientific milestone, the biological equivalent of the Wright Brothers’ first airplane...It’s a bit like learning how to turn lead into gold.” Dr. Robert Lanza, chief science officer of Advanced Cell Technology, a pioneer in the effort to extract stem cells from cloned embryos

April 13 - Speaking in defense of the 2000 Partial-Birth Abortion Act, Rep Henry Hyde who, died this past year said, “This is not a debate about religious doctrine or even about public policy options. It is a debate about our understanding of human dignity, what it means to be a member of the human family, even though tiny, powerless and unwanted.”

April 20 -“We are knee deep in a culture of death.... Our moment in history is marked by a mortal conflict between a culture of life and a culture of death. God put us in the world to do noble things, to love and cherish our fellow human beings, not to destroy them.” the late Rep. Henry Hyde, eloquent defender of the unborn.

April 27 – Abortion is a procedure important to the process of *in vitro* fertilization, since “fetal reduction” is routinely used. Moreover, embryos are often destroyed in order to choose the most viable embryo for implantation into the woman’s womb. Further, “left-over” embryos are often looked upon as resources for scientific research, rather than as human beings at the beginning of their life who should never be objects of research done not for their benefit but for someone else’s. Richard Doerflinger, Associate Director of the U.S. Catholic Bishops’ Pro-Life Secretariat, commented that “one would have to call the IVF procedure a fairly efficient method of abortion, with a 95-96% success rate.”

Suggested Prayers

March 9 – That this nation may emerge from the Culture of Death to fully embrace the Culture of Life, we pray

March 16 – That those blessed with the gifts of communication may use these talents to convincingly proclaim the sanctity of all life, we pray

March 23 – For all those who feel burdened by an unexpected pregnancy, that they may be willing to make the sacrifice to nurture the new life of their unborn child, we pray

March 30 – For the disciples and apostles in our day, that they may teach that each human life is a gift from God, we pray

April 6 – For those who care for the elderly and disabled, that they may know the reality of Jesus’ presence in their daily life, we pray

April 13 – For women whose pregnancy causes them physical or mental suffering that they may call on God’s strength, we pray

April 20 – For, every unborn child threatened by the possibility of abortion, we pray

April 27 – That the Holy Spirit may guide government and religious leaders in their decisions affecting protection of all human life, we pray

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More News

Barack Obama Reported to Have Close Ties with Illinois Pro-Abortion Group

According to an ABC News interview, Barack Obama coordinated his position on abortion-related bills with Illinois Planned Parenthood when he was a member of the Illinois state legislature.

Pam Sutherland, CEO of the Illinois Planned Parenthood Council, told ABC News that Obama voted "present" on bills concerning partial-birth abortion, parental notification and protection of infants who survive abortion, "with the explicit support of the president and CEO of Illinois Planned Parenthood Council."

"We at Planned Parenthood view those as leadership votes. We worked with him specifically on his strategy," Sutherland reported. "Obama made sure those bills got as few votes as possible for passage."

Sutherland told ABC News that Obama "came to me and said: 'My members are being attacked. We need to figure out a way to protect members.'"

According to an interview with Chicago Sun-Times, Sutherland explained that the goal of the strategy which Obama and Illinois Planned Parenthood Council devised was "to entice moderate Republicans and Democrats to also vote present, helping to defeat the bills"

"What it did was to give cover to moderate Democrats who wanted to vote with us but were afraid to do so," Sutherland said.

The bills in question were two on parental notification (HB1900 and SB 562) in 2001; two in 1997 about partial-birth abortion (HB 382 and SB 230); and a series of bills to protect infants who survive abortion (SB 1093, 1094, 1095).

Bishop Yanta, Supporter of Missionaries of the Gospel of Life, To Retire

An outspoken pro-life leader, Bishop John Yanta of Amarillo, Texas, has announced his retirement. After reaching the standard retirement age of 75 in October, the Vatican requested he stay on, but he is now stepping aside to be replaced by Bishop Patrick Zurek, formerly the Auxiliary bishop in San Antonio.



Bishop John Yanta

Bishop Yanta helped Fr. Frank Pavone in establishing a new pro-life community for seminarians, the Missionaries of the Gospel of Life. He provided several vacant buildings in the Amarillo diocese for the new community.

At the time of the foundation of the community, the bishop announced, "This is a historic day and only God knows how significant it will prove to be for the pro-life movement in this country and around the world.

"I am excited about supporting Fr. Pavone in venturing forth, with and through the Holy Spirit, in the establishment of a Society of Apostolic Life for priests and seminarians dedicated to pro-life ministry--an immense need at this time in history," Bishop Yanta declared.

Fr. Pavone, director of Priests for Life, explained that the community would help those lay people and seminarians who desire to work in the pro-life movement full time. Fr. Pavone and Priests for Life will provide training and pro-life education, then the missionaries will be sent forth into the pro-life community in a variety of capacities.

"I am grateful to Bishop Yanta for allowing me the opportunity to make this dream a reality," Fr. Pavone remarked.

UNFPA Annual Report Reflects Pro-Abortion Agenda

According to the recently released annual report of the United Nations population agency, UNFPA, two-thirds of its budget will be spent on "reproductive health services." The agency complains that "millions of pregnancies are still unwanted or mistimed." The agency reportedly is concerned about "unsafe abortion," but this term is used by the UNFPA officials to mean "illegal" abortion. The agency pressures countries to legalize abortion and spend more for "reproductive health services," a term often misused to

mean abortion. According to Executive Director Thoraya Obaid, the work of UNFPA will be "to link reproductive health, population and gender with the broader issues of poverty reduction." However, only \$51 million will go to development programs, while \$148 million is for reproductive health programs. Under the Bush administration, the U.S. has not contributed to UNFPA because of its support for the forced abortion program in China.