

Embryonic Stem Cell Research

Scientists believe that cures for many diseases may be developed from research using stem cells. The current thinking in the scientific community is evolving regarding whether or not embryonic stem cells are more versatile than adult stem cells and induced pluripotent stem cells for creating cures for diseases. Each method has its own challenges when attempting to use them for regenerative medicine. However, harvesting embryonic stem cells requires the destruction of human embryos which is opposed by the Catholic Church.

According to Church teaching, the directly intended destruction of any innocent human life is intrinsically immoral. This means that the action is morally wrong no matter how good the intentions or consequences of that action may be. The potential for valuable treatments being derived from embryonic stem cell research thus creates a dilemma for Catholic institutions that hold to the belief of the intrinsic value of human life, deserving of great respect, at any stage of development.

Given our Catholic tradition and teachings, as well as the state of stem cell research, PeaceHealth operates under the following position regarding embryonic stem cell research:

- PeaceHealth accepts the NIH's statement that embryonic stem and germ cells are not themselves embryos.
- PeaceHealth believes that a meaningful distinction can be made between the *derivation* of stem cells and their *use* for research or therapeutic purposes.
- By *derivation*, we refer to the processes by which different types of stem cells are obtained or isolated from their respective sources.
- Embryonic stem cells are obtained from the inner cell mass of a 4- to 5-day old human embryo, resulting in the destruction of the embryo.
- Embryonic germ cells are obtained from aborted fetal tissue.
- Adult stem cells are obtained from various tissues in adults and from aborted fetal tissue.
- By *use* we refer to how the stem cells, once derived, are employed for research or therapeutic ends.
- Assuming the proper safeguards are in place to protect research subjects, PeaceHealth has no moral objections to the derivation of stem cells from adults or to their use in research or for therapeutic purposes.
- As a Catholic health system, PeaceHealth will not participate in the derivation of stem cells from human embryos or aborted fetal tissues.
- If therapies become feasible using embryonic stem cells and embryonic germ cells PeaceHealth will evaluate them on the basis of our Catholic moral tradition and our Mission and Values.

- If PeaceHealth partners with or considers partnering with an institution that is doing research with human embryonic stem cells and embryonic germ cells, PeaceHealth evaluates this partnership on the basis of our Catholic moral tradition and our Mission and Values.