

Stem cell research guidelines to be proposed at U.S. summit

Last Updated: Monday, September 21, 2009 | 8:29 PM ET [Comments8](#)[Recommend13](#)

The Canadian Press

A charter devised by Canadians outlining the ethical principles that should guide international stem cell research is being presented Tuesday at the World Stem Cell Summit in Baltimore.

The Stem Cell Charter is a collective call to action in support of stem cell research and a web-based, interactive document detailing how that science should be advanced, said lead author Bartha Knoppers, a bioethicist at McGill University in Montreal.

The charter, available in both English and French at stemcellcharter.org, lays out a code of conduct for stem cell researchers aimed at promoting science that is carried out in a responsible, ethical way while protecting people from harm and safeguarding the public trust.

"There have been a lot of spurious claims in this area, people doing the first of this or the first of that, and it not being true," said Knoppers.

For instance, some private clinics in China and other countries say they can cure a number of diseases using stem cell injections, but there is no scientific evidence to back up their claims.

"We'd like to keep it a credible science," said Knoppers. "We'd like to keep it a science that merits public investment and public funding."

People need to know how to "distinguish the real science from the hyped-up private profiteering," Knoppers said.

Signing on and adhering to the charter is one way of doing that, she said.

"It's a wake-up call to scientists to remind them that if they want to work in this field, they have to do so under a scientific code of conduct and it's to reassure the public that this is not the Wild West."

Voluntary charter

The voluntary charter will be presented as part of the keynote address to the summit by Alan Lewis, president and CEO of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International, one of the organizations that has already signed the document.

Stem cells have the potential to turn into other types of cells and are considered the Holy Grail of regenerative medicine. Researchers around the world are working on using stem cells as the basis for treating debilitating and often fatal conditions, such as multiple sclerosis, blindness, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, arthritis, diabetes and spinal cord injuries.

"We all have a vested interest in finding cures and moving them to the clinic," James Price, head of the Canadian Stem Cell Foundation, said in a statement. "This is why we created the Stem Cell

Charter. It's something that everyone, whether they are doctors, scientists, policy makers or the general public, can get behind.

"It unifies us in support of this vital area of research."

Ottawa researcher Dr. Michael Rudnicki, president of the Stem Cell Network, said the charter is a vehicle for members of the public who support stem cell research to make their voices heard.

He said the fact it was developed by Canadians reflects the country's leadership in the field.

"Stem cells were first shown to exist in Canada, by [James] Till and [Ernest] McCulloch, and we remain leaders scientifically in the area of stem cell research," Rudnicki said.

"I think often this fact isn't recognized by government. This is an area of clear strategic strength for Canada."

The stemcellcharter.org website also includes videos showcasing 11 scientists from Canada detailing their research using stem cells.

© The Canadian Press, 2009

THE CANADIAN PRESS 

- This story is now closed to commenting.

Note: The CBC does not necessarily endorse any of the views posted. Please note that comments are published according to our [submission guidelines](#).

Story comments (8)

Sort: [Most recent](#) | [First to last](#) | [Agreed](#)

rebutnik wrote: Posted 2009/09/23

at 2:19 AM ET The development of drugs and therapies no longer hinges on "the greatest benefit to mankind" but to corporate profitability. Using bone marrow and umbilical cord stem cells should be a topic under general nutrition instead of patented pharmaceutical products.

You're telling the mother of a child with CP to wait for you to develop a product while Canadian and US CP children going to China are seeing something happen?

The only people hurt when a Canadian receives adult stem cell therapy in China today are the scientists betting on their own product.

We should be very careful that our moral compass not be secretly tied to our pocketbooks. There's no patent in an umbilical cord. Only a method of delivery. Thankfully we keep making them.

- [1](#)
- [3](#)

[1 Agree 3 Disagree Policy Report abuse](#)

mr. e pantsuit wrote: Posted 2009/09/22

at 3:19 PM ETone guideline should be: "no throwing stem cells."

- [2](#)
- [2](#)

[2 Agree 2 Disagree Policy Report abuse](#)

MableSpam wrote: Posted 2009/09/22

at 12:35 PM ETDebraSharp wrote:

The scientists are passionate about the "betterment of mankind".

If scientists are independently researching at universities...then more power to them.

The moment a scientist signs an employment contract with megacorp...then any cures will be patented by megacorp and sold to only those that can afford it.

Just ask the millions of Africans who will die because megacorp will not drop their AIDS treatment prices or release the patent to generic companies to make them affordable (1/10th the cost).

- [7](#)
- [1](#)

[7 Agree 1 Disagree Policy Report abuse](#)

Sidelineer wrote: Posted 2009/09/22

at 12:17 PM ET@MableSpam Watch the video.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0iHyg3YNa0>

The scientists are passionate about the "betterment of mankind".

- [7](#)
- [0](#)

[7 Agree 0 Disagree Policy Report abuse](#)

JimTill wrote: Posted 2009/09/22

at 10:12 AM ETThe 2nd paragraph of the Stem Cell Charter: "The Stem Cell Charter maintains that stem cell science has the potential to revolutionize the practice of medicine, develop treatments for diseases and create unprecedented hope for humanity." See: <http://stemcellcharter.org/>

- [11](#)
- [0](#)

[11 Agree 0 Disagree Policy Report abuse](#)

- Previous

- [1](#)
- [2](#)
- [Next](#)

This story is now closed to commenting.

Note: The CBC does not necessarily endorse any of the views posted. Please note that comments are published according to our [submission guidelines](#).