

## **Stem cell debate comes to campus**

**Author Eve Herold discusses the political and ethical issues surrounding stem cell research.**

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It didn't take long for people to fill the Phyllis P. Marshall Center Ballroom on Monday night to discuss the always controversial topic of stem cell research.

Eve Herold, director of public policy research at the Genetics Policy Institute, spoke about her book *Stem Cell Wars: Inside Stories from the Frontlines* and addressed the political and ethical mechanics of stem cell research lobbying.

The lecture was co-sponsored by the Student Society for Stem Cell Research (SSSR) along with the Office of Undergraduate Research.

"It is very important for us to have Miss Herold here," said Sriram Madhusoodanan, president of SSSR. "Our organization is about 3 years old, and to be able to work with others and bring her here and talk about stem cell research is wonderful."

In *Stem Cell Wars*, Herold explains the process of stem-cell therapies and discusses the constant conflict between medical researchers and religious extremists in the expansion of embryonic stem cell research.

"We have a situation now in which a small minority of Americans and religious extremists have been able to dictate public policy," Herold said. "They have been able to decide what medical research can be done regardless of how many people can be helped and touched by that research."

Embryonic stem cells are said to potentially cure diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, diabetes, muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis through the transfer of "pluripotent" cells: the cells that occupy a human embryo within the first few days of development.

According to Herold, in July 2006, President Bush vetoed the Castle-Degette bill, or HR3, that would have expanded federal stem cell research funding. The bill had passed in Congress, but failed to pick up enough votes in the House and Senate to overrule a potential veto.

Most of the funding that goes into stem cell research is currently done through private sectors and Herold explains that they are the weakest link in the chain of research because they're far less regulated.

Herold used the Korean Cloning Scandal as an example for limited government control on stem cell research. In 2005, veterinarian Woo Suk Hwang of South Korea was under investigation for buying eggs from female lab researchers and using them for embryonic cell formation at Seoul National University.

According to Herold, it is considered unethical in Korea to use or donate female eggs for any purposes. Hwang resigned from the World Stem Cell Hub in November 2005 for his practices and was indicted on charges of fraud for embezzling nearly \$3 million the World Stem Cell Hub in 2006.

In 2007, the United States is projected to spend about \$605 million on stem cell research according to the Genetics Policy Institute. However, only about five states have dedicated funding to stem cell research, while some criminalize the practice.

"In Michigan, clients who want to do therapeutic cloning to create genetically matched stem cells can go to jail and be charged up to \$1 million," Herold said. "There is a real problem with the balkanization of healthcare."

Herold's lecture comes less than a week after Gov. Charlie Crist's call for the state to spend \$20 million on adult stem cell research. Crist spoke at a USF brain research facility on Wednesday about writing the initiative into the 2007-08 state budget.

SSSR President Madhusoodanan said that it is good to have support for stem cell research, but said that he is curious to see what developments are ahead.

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