

**CNN NEWSNIGHT AARON BROWN, CNN**  
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BROWN: Tomorrow, at the United Nations, leading scientists from around the world will explain why they believe banning certain types of stem cell research would be a grave mistake.

It will be the latest round in an international debate over microscopic building blocks of life. Stem cells are biological chameleons with the potential to develop into any type of body tissue, which makes them potentially invaluable. Some of the people who may one day benefit from them will be at the U.N. tomorrow.

Reporting tonight, CNN's Elizabeth Cohen.  
(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

ELIZABETH COHEN, CNN MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): Stem cell research has pitted Calista Flockhart and Harrison Ford against the pope, a Republican president against Nancy Reagan, and scientists from around the world against countries proposing a United Nations ban on certain types of stem cell research.

DR. GERALD FISCHBACH, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY: I think a moratorium or a ban would cast a pall over stem cell research. But even more than, it would cast a pall over all of science.

COHEN: The debate inside and outside the U.N. has become more highly personal. Daniel Heumann was paralyzed in a car accident. He'll tell U.N. delegates why allowing this type of stem cell research to continue is so important to him.

DANIEL HEUMANN, STEM CELL RESEARCH ADVOCATE: Some day, that will help my dream come true to be back on my feet and be with my wife and my child as an able-bodied husband and father.

COHEN: Mrs. Reagan's husband suffers from Alzheimer's. She's lobbying President Bush to undo his decision to sharply limit federal funding for stem cell research.

NANCY REAGAN, FORMER FIRST LADY: There are so many diseases that can be cured or at least helped. We have lost so much time already and I just really can't bear to lose any more.

COHEN: But Bush and representatives of many predominantly Catholic countries point out that to do some kinds of stem cell research requires destroying an embryo.

GEORGE W. BUSH, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Embryonic stem cell researches offer both great promise and great peril. COHEN: They're microscopic and sitting unused by the thousands in fertility clinics, but for Bush and for the pope, the embryos are more than just a mass of frozen cells.

BUSH: He has sent a consistent word throughout the church and throughout society that we ought to take into account the preciousness of life.

COHEN: And there is another ethical debate. Scientists believe that the very best medical treatments would come from making an embryo that is genetically identical to the patient. But, technically, that involves cloning, the exact type of stem cell research the U.N. proposal would ban. Such a ban would have no legal weight, but it will have a heavy symbolic meaning for those who believe stem cell research could save lives and for those who believe it destroys life.

Elizabeth Cohen, CNN, reporting.