

## Scientist defends some cloning

NEW YORK - The first scientist to extract stem cells from cloned human embryos told United Nations correspondents that therapeutic human cloning should not be banned.

Dr. Hwang Woo-suk, a professor of veterinary studies at Seoul National University, defended therapeutic cloning at a press briefing here Wednesday, a week before a UN debate on a proposed treaty that would ban the practice.

Representatives from the Genetics Policy Institute, the Coalition for the Advancement of Medical Research and Advancing Science, Serving Society were also here to back Dr. Hwang, 52, who said, "These studies can give hope to patients suffering from incurable diseases."

He continued, "The object of cloning cells is to open the doors to cures for those suffering from degenerative diseases." He said flatly that human cloning was technically impossible, a riposte to anti-cloning groups who fear that cloned human beings would eventually follow.

"If we stop the research now, it would cause great setbacks in science and medicine," he said.

In a poignant "message from the grave," the press conference participants also viewed a videotaped address by Christopher Reeve, the actor who suffered spinal injuries and was a quadriplegic for nine years before dying of a heart attack earlier this week. Mr. Reeve was also a champion of therapeutic cloning research.

Too many people still suffer from diseases like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's because no treatments are available, the actor said. He urged a continuation of research to find treatments for those diseases, and said he hoped the UN would make "the right decision" after its debate.

Costa Rica proposed the treaty banning therapeutic cloning; 60 additional countries, including the United States and Italy support it. Twenty nations, including Korea and Belgium, have voiced opposition.

Although the treaty would not apply to countries that refused to join it, Korea worries that it would slow research.

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