

Stem Cell Scientist Urges Therapeutic Cloning

By Kim Tae-gyu

Staff Reporter

Seoul National University professor Hwang Woo-suk, a well-known stem cell scientist, on Wednesday urged the United Nations not to ban therapeutic human cloning.

During a conference at the UN headquarters in New York, Hwang stated that human cloning is technically impossible and stressed the importance of therapeutic research.

“Therapeutic cloning carries so much importance because it can lead to new treatments for curing millions worldwide suffering terminal diseases,” Hwang said.

Genetic therapy is touted as the future of medical treatment for such hard-to-cure diseases like cancer, Parkinson’s disease, Alzheimer’s and diabetes.

Hwang, who surprised the world by cloning a human embryo in February for the first time in the world, has articulated commitment to the cloning for the purpose of treatment.

“If we stop this research now, it would trigger tremendous setbacks in scientific and medical fields. Therapeutic cloning is the only hope for patients suffering from degenerative diseases,” he claimed.

To show the potential of the new therapy, Hwang explained the process of injecting spinal nerve cells into a dog with an impaired spinal nerve.

The remarks and experiment came before a vote on a Costa Rica-sponsored bill which is expected to take place late next week. The bill bans any form of human cloning.

The United States and 60-plus nations including Costa Rica vow to pass the bill.

Meanwhile, Korea, Japan and many European countries seek an alternative bill still prohibiting reproductive cloning but allowing human cloning for use in scientific research especially in therapy.

Observers expect the vote would be very close. The bill was raised for passage last year but the UN General Assembly put off the decision so it could be studied further.

voc200@koreatimes.co.kr

10-14-2004 17:08