

Dr. Hwang Woo-Suk Seeks U.N. Support for Stem Cell Research

Stem cell research is a key topic of debate in the U.S. presidential race. The issue has taken on greater attention with the recent death of Superman actor Christopher Reeve, who was a vocal campaigner for stem cell research.

The United Nations will vote on a key bill related to the research next week, and a prominent South Korean scientist made an appeal for the therapeutic use of stem cells. Professor Hwang Woo-suk is urging member countries of the United Nations not to ban therapeutic stem cell research.

The South Korean scientist won international recognition last year when he successfully extracted stem cells from cloned human embryos for the first time ever. His appeal comes amid sharp divisions over the issue among members of the 191-nation U.N. General Assembly.

A vote is pending next week on whether to include such research in a broader treaty against human cloning. Speaking before U.N. ambassadors and reporters from around the world, Dr. Hwang brushed aside concerns that stem cell research could lead to human cloning.

“Because at least 50,000 egg cells and one thousand surrogate mothers are required to proceed with such experiments, along with the life-threatening risks some women could face, human cloning is fundamentally impossible.” Hwang said.

The conference showed a pre-recorded video message by the late Christopher Reeve. The Superman icon who died after a long battle with paralysis advocated stem cell research and called for the right decision that will provide hope to millions all over the world.

His recent death brought the issue of stem cell research to the forefront of the U.S. presidential campaign. President Bush opposes the use of human embryos as a source of stem cells while his Democratic challenger seeks the expansion of federal support for such research.

Proponents of therapeutic cloning contend stem cell research can lead to new treatments and cures for millions people struggling with cancer, Parkinson’s disease, Alzheimer’s, diabetes and spinal cord injury.

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