

On August 4 the National Institute of Health announced plans to lift a moratorium funding research injecting human embryonic stem cells into animal embryos. The intent is to create part animal and part human organisms for medical research purposes. If NIH plans are implemented, US taxpayers will fund research creating and manipulating new organisms whose existence blurs the line between human and animal life. I strongly object to this research on fiscal and moral grounds. While stem cell research may appear promising, other higher priority medical challenges such as cancer research could better employ the funding. NIH's proposed research concerns me morally because: 1) Research relies on the killing of humans at the embryonic stage to harvest stem cells (and not use donated human eggs as some might suggest.); 2) Research would attempt to create animals with partial or substantially human brains; 3) Research would attempt to produce organisms or animal life that could potentially reproduce despite NIH guidelines establishing procedures to prevent breeding. 4) Research would introduce human embryonic stem cells into animal embryos early in their development obscuring the extent human cells contribute to the resulting organism. Thus, NIH researcher's moral obligation to that created being will be unknown or ignored in the manner of German medical experiments conducted in the 1930's and 1940's. Unfortunately, NIH has given little consideration to these ethical concerns. Ray O. Embree