

Students react to Obama's stem cell policy

Contributed by Caitlyn McEvilly - Staff Writer
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President Obama's recent executive order repealing a Bush policy in which federal tax dollars for embryonic stem cell research were limited led to opposing student reactions throughout campus.

President Obama's decision overturns Bush's 2001 order that limited the National Institutes of Health (NIH) from funding any research on stem cells other than the 60 cell lines that were already in existence. At the same time, President Obama signed a presidential memorandum that will give more independence to federal science policies and programs.

One outcome of the order is the NIH is expected to revise guidelines on federal funding for embryonic stem cell research within 120 days.

With these large changes in government policy, Benedictine students have reacted.

Talitha Hazelton, senior, thinks adult stem cell research makes sense, but draws the line there.

"I'd be more than willing to see tax money go to funding stem cell research, as long as it is adult stem cells. If the government wants to give tax dollars to embryonic stem cell research, then tax payers should have a choice or it should be funded another way," Hazelton said.

Margaret Tarski, sophomore, had different feelings on the issue.

"I think Obama did what he thought was best for the country, and it's going to eventually save lives and advance medicine. If the choice is throwing the embryo away like lots of in-vitro parents do, or doing research to save lives then I don't see a difference in embryonic stem cell research and adult stem cell research," Tarski said.

While the debate between embryonic and adult stem cell research is ongoing, Obama's memorandum that will give the NIH more independence is a new move.

"He's trying to remove himself from the liability and allow groups to be autonomous. It's a good political move, but I think a lot of people can see through it," Hazelton said.

Tarski views the new freedom as a necessary for the advancement of science.

"I think they need some type of freedom to do the job they're supposed to do," Tarski said.

President Obama, along with many citizens, hope that the new orders will lead to the curing of many diseases.

For Hazelton, the promise of new health benefits does not outweigh the moral issues that embryonic stem cell research raise.

"An evil means can never be justified by a good end. The ends never justifies the means, it's not in line with Catholic teachings. It's problematic because it puts the government in a position to decide if new life or lives of people being helped are more important," Hazelton said.

Tarski's views on the moral implications of embryonic stem cell research are very different.

"I think the real moral question is how can we sit around and not let medicine advance and not help people," Tarski said.

President Obama's executive orders will continue to cause different reactions from citizens, but the question of the morality of embryonic stem cell research will always be a popular debate among Benedictine College students.