

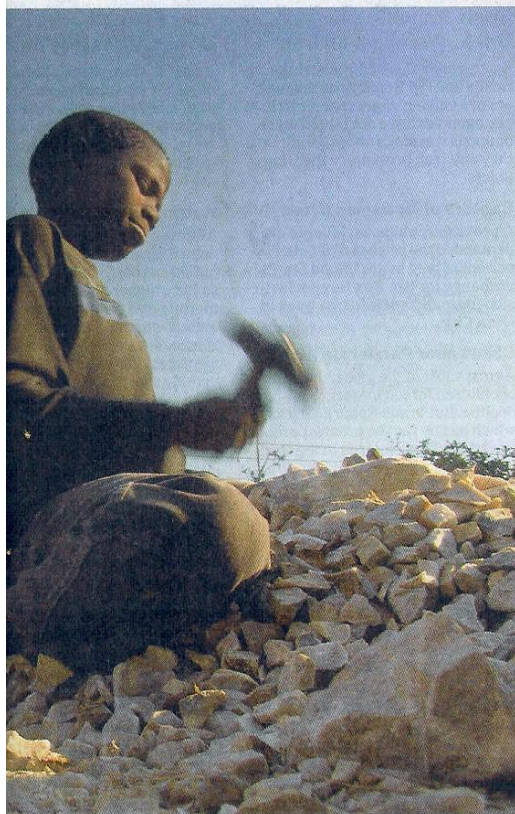
New York Times

THURSDAY, AUGUST 24, 2006

ONE DOLLAR

New England Edition

Boston: Turning cloudy, cool, high 70. Tonight, showers, low 57. Tomorrow, continued cloudy, cool and damp with a few showers and patchy drizzle, high 69. Weather map is on Page C15.



Jeffrey Barbee for The New York Times

Chibanda, 10, breaks rocks for gravel to help his family subsist.

rable Ranks of Child Workers

Poverty Drives Many to Risky Jobs With Meager Pay

In four children below age 14, whether full time or for a few hours a week, nearly the same percentage as the worldwide average in 1960. In many countries, by far the greatest proportion of children in the world. The United Nations' latest estimate shows more than 49 million sub-Saharan children age 14 and younger in 2004, 1.3 million more than in 2000, the turn of the century just four years earlier. In many of these countries, the tasks are not merely the work and garden-tending common in most developing societies. They are prostitutes, miners, construction workers, pesticide sprayers, street vendors, full-time

servants, and they are not necessarily even paid for their labor. Some are as young as 5 and 6 years old. In Kenya, nearly a third of the coffee pickers were children, a 2001 World Bank report found. In Tanzania, 25,000 children worked in hazardous jobs on plantations and in mines. Their numbers in Africa grow even as the ranks of child laborers are dropping by the millions in every other region of the world. Child labor declines with prosperity, and so the region's economic plight — 44 percent of sub-Saharan residents live on less than \$1 a day, far and away the greatest share on earth — is a big reason. But so are social mores that regard hard work by children as the norm, and conflicts that scatter families and kill breadwinners. So is the staggering H.I.V. rate, which has created millions of or-

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Some in G.O.P. Say Iran Threat Is Played Down

Spy Agencies Blamed for Mild Assessments

By MARK MAZZETTI

WASHINGTON, Aug. 23 — Some senior Bush administration officials and top Republican lawmakers are voicing anger that American spy agencies have not issued more ominous warnings about the threats that they say Iran presents to the United States.

Some policy makers have accused intelligence agencies of playing down Iran's role in Hezbollah's recent attacks against Israel and overestimating the time it would take for Iran to build a nuclear weapon.

The complaints, expressed privately in recent weeks, surfaced in a Congressional report about Iran released Wednesday. They echo the tensions that divided the administration and the Central Intelligence Agency during the prelude to the war in Iraq.

The criticisms reflect the views of some officials inside the White House and the Pentagon who advocated going to war with Iraq and now are pressing for confronting Iran directly over its nuclear program and ties to terrorism, say officials with knowledge of the debate.

The dissonance is surfacing just as the intelligence agencies are overhauling their procedures to prevent a repeat of the 2002 National Intelligence Estimate — the faulty assessment that in part set the United States on the path to war with Iraq.

The new report, from the House Intelligence Committee, led by Representative Peter Hoekstra, Republican of Michigan, portrayed Iran as a growing threat and criticized American spy agencies for cautious assessments about Iran's weapons programs. "Intelligence community managers and analysts must provide their best analytical judgments about Iranian W.M.D. programs and not shy away from provocative conclusions or bury disagreements in consensus assessments," the report said, using the abbreviation for weapons of mass destruction like nuclear arms.

Some policy makers also said they were displeased that American spy agencies were playing down intelligence reports — including some from the Israeli government — of extensive contacts recently between Hezbollah and members of Iran's Revolutionary Guard. "The people in

Continued on Page A13

IN NEW METHOD FOR STEM CELLS, VIABLE EMBRYOS

OBJECTIONS TO USE REMAIN

Development Could Raise the Level of Debate in Midterm Elections

By NICHOLAS WADE

Biologists have developed a technique for establishing colonies of human embryonic stem cells from an early human embryo without destroying it. This method, if confirmed in other laboratories, would seem to remove the principal objection to the research.

It could also redirect and intensify the emotional political debate over limits on federal financing for research on human embryonic stem cells, which give rise to the cells and tissues of the body and which scientists and patient advocate groups see as a potential source for new treatments for diseases like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and diabetes.

But the new method, which is being reported by researchers at Advanced Cell Technology today on the Web site of the journal Nature, also brought objections from critics who warned of possible risk to the embryo and the in vitro fertilization procedure itself, in which embryos are generated from a couple's egg and sperm.

The new technique would be performed on a two-day-old embryo, after the fertilized egg has divided into eight cells, known as blastomeres. In fertility clinics, where the embryo is available outside the woman in the normal course of in vitro fertilization, one of these blastomeres can be removed for diagnostic tests, like for Down syndrome.

The embryo, now with seven cells, can be implanted in the woman if no defect is found. Many such embryos have grown into apparently healthy babies over the 10 years or so the diagnostic tests have been used.

Up to now, human embryonic stem cells have been derived at a later stage of development, when the embryo consists of about 150 cells. Both this stage, called the blastocyst, and the earlier eight-cell stage, occur before the embryo implants in the wall of the womb. Harvesting the blastocyst-stage cells kills the embryo, a principal objection of those who oppose the research.

"There is no rational reason left to oppose this research," Dr. Robert Lanza, vice president of Advanced Cell Technology and leader of the research team, said in an interview.

With the approach of midterm

Continued on Page A21

Storm's Escape Routes: One Forced, One Chosen

By SHAILA DEWAN

ATLANTA, Aug. 23 — The small, brightly painted a heraldic bright green,



In New Method for Deriving Lines of Human Embryonic

Continued From Page A1

elections, in which some candidates are already making the research a central theme, some scientists speculated that President Bush might embrace the new method as meeting his principal objection to the research and showing that he had been right all along to wait for a better technique to turn up.

But Emily Lawrimore, a White House spokeswoman, suggested that the new procedure would not satisfy the objections of Mr. Bush, who vetoed legislation in July that would have expanded federally financed embryonic stem cell research. Though Ms. Lawrimore called it encouraging that scientists were moving away from destroying embryos, she said: "Any use of human embryos for research purposes raises serious ethical questions. This technique does not resolve those concerns."

Last year, Dr. Lanza reported that embryonic stem cell cultures could be derived from the blastomeres of mice, a finding others have confirmed. He now says the same can be done with human blastomeres, and that the colonies of cells behave in the same way as those derived from blastocysts.

Although he used discarded human embryos, he said that anyone who wished to derive human embryonic stem cells without destroying an embryo could use a blastomere removed for the test, called preimplantation genetic diagnosis.

"By growing the biopsied cell overnight," he said, "the resulting cells could be used for both P.G.D. and the generation of stem cells without affecting the subsequent chances of having a child."

Ronald M. Green, an ethicist at Dartmouth College and an adviser to Advanced Cell Technology, said he hoped the new method "provides a way of ending the impasse about federal funding for this research."

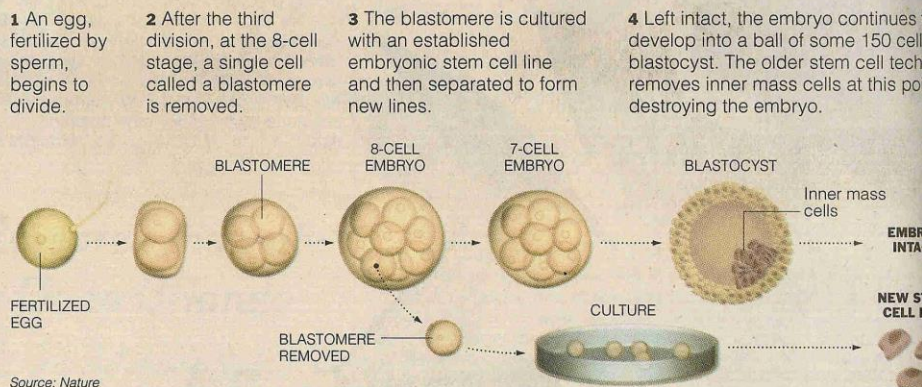
Professor Green said he believed the method should be seen as compatible with the Dickey-Wicker amendment, the Congressional measure that prohibits using federal money for any research in which a human embryo is destroyed or exposed to undue risk.

Dr. James Battey, head of the stem cell task force at the National Institutes of Health, said that it was not immediately clear if the new method would be compatible with the Congressional restriction, since removal of a blastomere subjected the embryo to some risk, but that embryos on which the genetic test was performed seemed to be as healthy as all other babies born by in vitro fertilization.

Gardiner Harris and Carl Hulse contributed reporting for this article.

One Stem Cell Line, One Growing Embryo

Scientists report a new method to make human embryonic stem cells that does not, as before, destroy the em



Source: Nature

Al Granberg/The New York Times

Mr. Bush has allowed federal financing for research on human embryonic stem cells, provided they were established before Aug. 9, 2001. Although that might seem to rule out any new cell lines derived from blastomeres, Dr. Battey said that was not clear because the embryo would not be destroyed, and that he would seek guidance on the point.

The federal policy does not affect privately financed stem cell research, like that done by Advanced Cell.

Critics have a range of objections to deriving human embryonic cell lines with the new method. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, in particular, oppose both in vitro fertilization and preimplantation genetic diagnosis, and therefore still object to the research.

Richard Doerflinger, deputy director for pro-life activities at the conference of bishops, said the church opposed in vitro fertilization because of the high death rate of embryos in clinics and because divorcing procreation from the act of love made

the embryo seem "more a product of manufacture than a gift."

Asked if he meant that the parents of a child conceived through in vitro fertilization would love it less, Mr. Doerflinger said he was referring to the clinic staff. "The technician does not love this child, has no personal connection with the child, and with every I.V.F. procedure he or she may get more and more used to the idea of the child as manufacture," he said.

Dr. Leon Kass, former chairman of the President's Council on Bioethics, said, "I do not think that this is the sought-for, morally unproblematic and practically useful approach we need."

Dr. Kass said the long term risk of preimplantation genetic diagnosis was unknown and that the present technique was inefficient, requiring blastomeres from many embryos to generate each new cell line. It would be better to derive human stem cell lines from the body's mature cells, he said, a method researchers are still working on.

Dr. Andrew La Barbera, scientific

director of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, said more than 2,000 babies had been born in the United States after a preimplantation genetic diagnosis. "There is no sign yet that they have a greater risk of disease than other in vitro fertilization babies, but the society needs more data to be sure."

I.R.S. Warns of Tax-Collection Swindlers

WASHINGTON, Aug. 23 (AP) — The Internal Revenue Service warned taxpayers on Wednesday of swindlers posing as debt collectors hired by the agency.

The I.R.S. created the collection program to minimize that risk, "because we know what it's like out there with regard to identity theft nowadays," Collection Director Brady Bennett said.

Some critics said the program had so many pitfalls that they were urging debtors to insist on negotiating directly with the agency. The National Treasury Employees Union,

which represents employees of the agency and opposes the program, has drafted a sample letter that taxpayers can send to leave the private collection program and demand that the agency handle their cases.

The agency said it planned to assign 12,500 accounts with unpaid debts to three companies beginning Sept. 7. About 40,000 accounts are to be transferred by Dec. 31. The agency chose taxpayers who owed less than \$25,000 and did not dispute the debt.

Taxpayers can call (800) 829-1040 for information and verifications.

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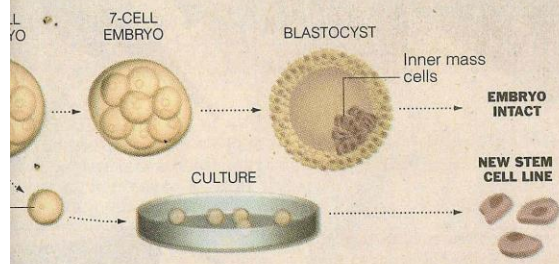
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4 Left intact, the embryo continues to develop into a ball of some 150 cells, the blastocyst. The older stem cell technique removes inner mass cells at this point, destroying the embryo.



Al Granberg/The New York Times

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La Barbera said.

Scientists welcomed the new de-
velopment but also expressed con-
cerns. Dr. Irving Weissman, a stem
cell expert at Stanford University,
said the new method, if confined to
blastomeres derived from preim-
plantation genetic testing, would not
provide a highly desired type of cell,
those derived from patients with a
specific disease.

Many scientists have come to re-
gard this use of the cells, to explore
the basic mechanisms of disease, as
more likely to provide new therapies
than direct use of the cells them-
selves.

Dr. Weissman said the new ad-
vance could lead into a "Congressional
trap" if Congress permitted new
lines to be established only during
the preimplantation genetic diagno-
sis procedure. This test looks for only
a handful of diseases, he said, and not
for Alzheimer's and the other degen-
erative diseases for which better
therapies are needed.

Congressional Republicans who
led the resistance to the embryonic
stem cell legislation that had bipartisan
support in the House and Senate
also said the new technique did not
ease their opposition. Brian Hart, a
spokesman for Senator Sam Brown-
back, Republican of Kansas and a
prominent opponent of federal fi-
nancing for embryonic stem cell re-

search, said Mr. Brownback's moral
objection remained.

"You are creating a twin and then
killing that twin," Mr. Hart said.

Dr. Lanza said, however, that twin-
ning is a phenomenon that occurs at
a later stage of embryonic develop-
ment and that there was no evidence
that a single blastomere could de-
velop into a person.

Democrats and others who had
pushed for added research using em-
bryos that were ultimately going to
be discarded stepped up their criti-
cism of the president and his Con-
gressional allies for holding back sci-
ence.

"It's tragic that the current Re-
publican Congress continues to rub-
ber stamp the restrictions that deny
federal funding for scientists en-
gaged in medical research that could
save or improve countless lives,"
said Senator Edward M. Kennedy,
Democrat of Massachusetts.

Political analysts said the new
findings could elevate embryonic
stem cell research as a campaign is-
sue by both keeping it in the news
and making it more difficult for op-
ponents to explain their position.

"It paints the pro-life community
into a corner," said Stuart Rothen-
berg, a nonpartisan analyst of Con-
gressional races. "As a rule, you
don't want to oppose scientific ad-
vances."

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