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News

For immediate release
Sunday, March 12, 2006

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New Yorkers Overwhelmingly Support Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research; State Funding Encouraged to Seek Cures

New York City:

A new **statewide poll** conducted by **Zogby International** finds that **New Yorkers strongly support medical research involving embryonic stem cells**, and in the absence of Federal funding they support New York State playing a role in financing the most advanced research possible.

"New Yorkers clearly understand what's at stake with the enormous promise of research involving embryonic stem cells, including the wide range of diseases for which therapies and cures may be possible," said **Susan L. Solomon**, CEO of the **New York Stem Cell Foundation** (www.nyscf.org). [NYSCF commissioned the poll in conjunction with **New Yorkers for the Advancement of Medical Research** (www.nyamr.org). A summary of poll results follows; full results are available upon request, and will be available on Monday at both web-sites.]

"The most important finding is that New Yorkers overwhelmingly support research involving embryonic stem cells and Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer (SCNT) – by 84% and 86%, respectively – and understand that appropriate limits on reproductive cloning do not and should not impede the full range of vital research that is possible," noted Solomon. "Because people can directly relate to someone suffering from Parkinson's, juvenile diabetes, Alzheimer's, lupus, cancer and other diseases, support for stem cell research was strong across the board. Regardless of age, ethnicity, geography, political affiliation or religion, New Yorkers are genuinely excited about the prospect of more effective therapies and cures that stem cell researchers are pursuing."

"As a way of reacting to the restrictions on Federal funding, 69% of New Yorkers expressed support for State funding for research involving embryonic stem cells, with support coming from all political and religious groups, including Republicans and Catholics," added **Robin Elliott**, Chairman of NYAMR (of which NYSCF is a member). "82% of New Yorkers said public support of stem cell research is an important election issue; while support from New York City voters was expectedly strong (85%), upstate voters were close behind (77%)."

NYAMR is a coalition of New York State-based disease advocacy groups, university research centers and biotech industry leaders formed to encourage investment in stem cell research by New York State; a proposal for \$200 million for such research – including embryonic stem cells – is currently before the State Legislature.

The poll was conducted during the first week of March; the telephone survey reached 705 New Yorkers who are likely voters on a range of topics, with six questions focused on views about stem cell research. [Margin of error is +/- 3.8 percentage points.]

The key findings include:

- 84% expressed much or some support (65% said “much”) for embryonic stem cell research – when its great promise for treatments and cures related to specific diseases like juvenile diabetes, spinal cord injuries and Parkinson’s was noted;
- When the process of somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT) was explained (i.e., merging an unfertilized egg with a patient’s own skin cell), 76% expressed support (50% “strong”);
- When the difference between SCNT and reproductive cloning was explained, 86% expressed support (58% “strong”) for SCNT;
- 69% expressed support (48% said “strong”) for State funding for research that includes embryonic stem cells;
- 71% expressed concern that New York could lose top scientists to other states and countries that are investing in less restrictive stem cell research; and,
- 82% say that the issue of public funding of stem cell research is important to them as voters.

“New Yorkers have now spoken on this issue, adding their voice to strong support shown by voters in several other states, as well as in national polls about moving forward with embryonic stem cell research,” said Solomon.

“While Federal support and funding is vital when it comes to investment in medical research, states like New York can provide real leadership – both immediately and when a new Governor is elected later this year,” added Elliott.

Conceived in mid-2005, the **New York Stem Cell Foundation (NYSCF)** is dedicated to furthering human embryonic stem cell research to advance the search for cures of the major diseases of our time.

NYSCF’s Mission:

- Educate the public about the importance and potential benefits of

human embryonic stem cell research (hESC) and somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT).

- Support stem cell research through grants to scientists working in their own labs, fellowships, symposia and journals.
- Create state-of-the-art collaborative research laboratories supported entirely with private funds.

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