



OVERDUE SHOT IN ARM FOR SCIENCE

By Daylon James

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PRESIDENT OBAMA'S order to lift the ban on federal funding for embryonic stem-cell research is great news, as the vast pool of federal money stands to accelerate progress in the field.

It's been a long time coming. The restrictions arbitrarily set by former President George W. Bush hampered progress.

With Obama's action, the federal government's commitment to the promise of embryonic stem-cell research has been affirmed. It will be a relief for young scientists who may want to embark on a career in stem-cell research but have been wary of the controversy surrounding the work.

I've been lucky enough to have private funding and support from the New York Stem Cell Foundation. And it is this type of resource that has led to incremental, though important, advances in the field, despite the ban.

But with the lifting of Bush era restrictions, a new wave of federal support will open the floodgates, leading to a huge increase in the number of labs and well-trained scientists devoted to embryonic stem cell research. When you have 10 people working toward a goal rather than one, it's a no-brainer: You'll have a lot greater chance of success.

The long-term potential of embryonic stem cells lies in their capacity to form all of the different cell types in the human body, providing a virtual toolkit for cell-based repair of damaged and/or diseased tissues and organs.

We can do better. We can make an old heart young again. While it may seem like science fiction, the brisk pace of advance in just the last couple years suggests that regenerative therapies are the logical and inevitable course of stem cell research.

Make no mistake: The future is now, and Obama's repeal of the Bush era restrictions is a boon to scientists, both young and old, who are committed to a future in embryonic stem-cell research.

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