



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

From Professor Roger D. Masters

Sir,

Stem Cell Politics

A recent issue of *Nature* (the leading British journal for scientific research) includes an article of major political importance. An Italian team of researchers has shown in an animal model that stem cell therapy can control the symptoms of multiple sclerosis (Stefano Pluchino, et al, "Injection of adult neurospheres induces recovery in a chronic model of multiple sclerosis," *Nature*, 422 (17 April 2003) 688-94. Columbia's celebrated neuroscientist, Gerard Fischbach, recently told a Dartmouth audience of the promise of similar techniques for growing brain cells as therapy for Parkinson's Disease and Alzheimer's Disease. Because STEM CELL RESEARCH WILL PRODUCE VALUABLE THERAPIES IN EUROPE, the important question for Americans is no longer

primarily one of ethics. Continuing the ban on American research in this crucial area will mean that these therapies will be available to the wealthy. Who wouldn't make the trip to Switzerland to reverse multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's, or Alzheimer's? Stem cell research is a question of public policy: who pays? who benefits? what is the collective interest? Given the awesome costs of residential care, we all pay for these diseases, though of course the highest costs are the suffering of those afflicted. All Americans will benefit from the improved therapies and lowering of health care costs. Write your Congressman and ask for hearings to reverse the position, taken by President Bush and others on religious grounds, blocking research on stem cell therapy.

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