

Statement Regarding Human Stem Cell Research

There is great enthusiasm in the scientific community for the potential of human stem cell research to lead to better treatments or perhaps even a cure for certain diseases. At this time, human stem cell research offers the most immediate hope in the fight against type 1 diabetes, Parkinson's disease, and spinal cord injury, where cell repair can be narrowly directed to a defined target.

While some researchers believe stem cell research may one day help people with Alzheimer's disease, they generally feel that such a day is far off in the future. Several issues complicate the applicability of stem cell treatments to Alzheimer's. For example:

- Alzheimer's disease is highly complex and the related cell damage spreads to large areas of the brain as the disease progresses. The potential of stem cell therapy to correct this widespread destruction is unclear and will require longer-term investigation.
- While newly implanted cells may be able to process and create new memories, they would not have the extensive network of connections built up over a lifetime by older cells nor would they retain previously stored memories.

Nonetheless, the Alzheimer's Association's policy, adopted in June 2004 by the national Board of Directors, states that: "In keeping with its mission to eliminate Alzheimer's disease, the Alzheimer's Association opposes any restriction or limitation on human stem cell research, provided that appropriate scientific review, and ethical and oversight guidelines are in place."

The Alzheimer's Association's goal is to eradicate Alzheimer's through the advancement of research. We therefore support any legitimate scientific avenue that offers the potential to advance this goal within appropriate boundaries. That said, human stem cell research is not a current research priority for the Alzheimer's Association.

Promising areas of Alzheimer's disease research today include:

- Understanding the role of amyloid in the brain.
- Risk factors related to genetics and lifestyle.
- Risk factors related to cardiovascular disease and metabolic disorders.
- Therapies to slow or stop the progression of the disease.
- Brain imaging for early diagnosis and improving drug testing.

- Adopted by the Alzheimer's Association National Board of Directors on June 2004