

EMBRYONIC STEM CELL RESEARCH INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK

The Ethical Investment Advisory Group recognises the potential of human embryonic stem cell research to promise new knowledge, life changing treatments and possible cures for many debilitating diseases and injuries, including Parkinson's disease, diabetes, heart disease, multiple sclerosis, burns and spinal cord injuries.

However, in harvesting embryonic stem cells for research, ethical issues arise. These relate mainly to the status of the embryo and whether it has the same right to protection that is accorded to early human life, on the basis of the traditional respect for the sanctity of that life. There are also concerns over the possibility and legitimacy of "designer" babies. Embryonic stem cells can be obtained from a number of sources, these being:

- Surplus embryos following IVF treatment (the harvesting of stem cells destroys the embryo)
- Aborted foetal material
- Umbilical cord blood
- Cloned embryos for therapeutic purposes

The EIAG has set out below an investment framework that seeks to be in keeping with the thinking and work of the Church of England's Council for Mission & Public Affairs in relation to research on stem cells derived from the above sources. This framework is intended to apply both to the large and small pharmaceutical, healthcare and biotechnology companies, and any others, that may use human embryonic stem cell research within their businesses.

- *An active engagement policy should be applied to any company involved in, or deriving significant use from, research using human embryonic stem cells, where this research is deemed "absolutely necessary" and only take place once all other possible avenues have been explored. In keeping with the framework, the Group:*
 - *is committed to continue to engage with the scientific community and companies in which the church's three main investing bodies invest so as to ensure the ethical imperatives in embryo research are never forgotten*
 - *will seek to affirm the mystery and sanctity of the human embryo and therefore the need to treat it with profound respect and reverence*
 - *recognises that there are different, but principled and sincerely held views among Christians on the morality of embryo research*
- *Whilst no international ban on human reproductive cloning exists, companies, a major part of whose business is engaged in the cloning of embryos (even for therapeutic use) should be avoided. There are widely held concerns that this technology may be used to clone a human child in countries in which there are no legal restrictions in reproductive cloning techniques.*

The Group recognises that advances in science are rapid, and in keeping with a flexible mandate, the Group will continually review this framework in keeping with any significant new findings or developments arising from this type of research.

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