

Issues in Neuroscience
Stem cells / moral status of an embryo
(Read: Gaz. Preface, Ch1 + articles as listed on web page)

Be prepared to contribute to a discussion based on the following four questions.

- 1) Background: Gazzaniga - Moral Status of an Embryo

Even though it is possible to inform a discussion of the moral status of an embryo scientifically (e.g. stage 23 weeks, etc.) Gazzaniga seems to conclude that deriving stem cells from human embryos seems ultimately to be an issue that goes *beyond* the scientific question of how it can be achieved. Discuss

- 2) Science: How stem cells are created (Nova)

Using the material in this slide series, be able to explain how stem cells are created.

- 3) Can viable human stem cells be created from human embryos – data for monkey studies.

This study's results greatly increase the likelihood that viable human stem cells can indeed be created from human embryos. Discuss why such a study yields a higher level of confidence than a mouse study. Comment on why it is important to ultimately be able to use monkeys, rather than other animals, in such studies.

- 4) Objections to human stem cell use (Vatican Bioethics)

Based on categories of “banned” and “accepted” practices where does the Catholic Church believe in an individual life begins? Re there any restrictions or inconsistencies in the Church's position?

- 5) Stem cells from skin cells (NYT)

This study seems to hold out the possibility of a technique that will avoid the moral objections of most stem cell opponents. Why? What might a weakness of this approach be?

More (not required)

Gazzaniga cites South Korean successes with human cells on page 13. It is now known that these “studies” were bogus.

The President has limited Federal support for stem cell research to some 12 already pre-existing stem cell lines.

To learn more about these and other major developments that we do not have time to delve into use the New York Times (NYT) Resources links.