

ABSTRACT

This entry focuses on some of the core ethical issues arising from human adult stem cell research. It begins with a brief exploration of the history and science behind adult stem cell research. It then addresses three main ethical concerns about adult stem cell use, namely, the question of whether research on human embryonic stem cells should be discontinued since an ethically less controversial alternative already exists in the form of adult stem cells, the possibility of creating gametes from adult stem cells which can be used for reproduction, and the issue of stem cell tourism, a situation where desperate patients travel abroad in search of unproven stem cell therapies. Regulatory and policy issues surrounding stem cell research are also discussed. The entry concludes by saying that whereas strict ethical regulation of stem cell research is required in order to protect the safety of research participants, this must be balanced against the need to advance stem cell biology and medicine.