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"Embryos are Humans" Says U.S. Government Report on Stem Cell Research Only differences from other human beings are accidental differences in levels of development

By John Jalsevac

WASHINGTON, D.C., January 10, 2007 (LifeSiteNews.com) – A new report by the United States governments' Domestic Policy Council admits that embryos are human beings; the only differences between embryos and other human beings, says the report, are accidental differences in levels of development.

"Embryos are humans in their earliest developmental stage," writes the Council.

"We do not have to think that human embryos are exactly the same in all ways as older humans to believe that they are entitled to respect and protection. Each of us originated as a single-celled embryo, and from that moment have developed along a continuous biological trajectory throughout our existence. To speak of 'an embryo' is to designate a human being at a particular stage."

The Domestic Policy Council, which coordinates the domestic policy-making process in the White House, and which is under the direction of President Bush, made these unequivocal statements about the human embryo in its report on stem-cell research entitled, "Advancing Stem Cell Science without Destroying Human Life."

The report, released earlier today, condemns the destruction of human embryos for the purpose of stem-cell research, and instead advocates alternative sources of stem-cells, including cells derived from amniotic fluid and adult stem-cells.

Research on these sources of stem-cells, says the report, hold much more promise on a purely scientific basis of producing results than the ethically condemnatory and scientifically uncertain research on embryonic stem-cells.

"In sum," reads the Executive Summary, "it increasingly appears that the qualities researchers value in embryonic cells may also exist in other stem cells that are easier to procure, more stable to grow, safer to use in therapies, and free of the ethical violations of embryo destruction."

Therefore, "There is no reason to sacrifice longstanding moral concerns in a shortsighted rush for therapeutic payoffs."

"We must make certain we don't force ourselves into a false choice between science and ethics—because we need both. And there is good reason, and growing scientific evidence, to believe that we can have both."

Nevertheless, while defending the humanity of the embryo with a clarity that is rarely, if ever, encountered in government reports, the document has significant areas that will undoubtedly be areas of concern in the eyes of many pro-life advocates.

The Domestic Policy Council goes to some length in its report to console President Bush's opponents on matters pertaining to stem-cell research by pointing out that there is no Presidential ban on embryonic stem cell research. The report instead boasts about the large sums of federal dollars that have been given towards embryonic stem cell research under President Bush's policy of permitting federal funding for research performed on pre-existing lines of

embryos.

Furthermore, while admitting that embryos are human beings, and therefore (presumably) deserving of the same rights as all other human beings and U.S. citizens, the report does not indicate that any action will be taken in the future towards what might seem as the logical conclusion of the admitted humanity of the embryo—that is, a federal ban not only on the funding of, but on the performance of all embryonic stem-cell research, including that which is privately-funded.

"Private-sector human embryonic stem cell research has been and continues to be permissible without restriction in the U.S.," boasts the report. "Contrary to common misperceptions, there is no Presidential ban on human embryonic stem cell research...In fact, funding by individual states is expected to add up to several billion dollars in the next few years."

The report also presents the possibility that so-called adult "pluripotent" cells—that is, adult cells that are "reprogrammed" to act like embryonic cells—may hold some promise as an ethical source of stem-cells. However, while avoiding making a definitive statement about the ethicality of the use of these unique pluripotent cells, neither does the report delve in any noteworthy depth into the serious concerns that numerous renowned ethicists and pro-life advocates have brought up about the procedure.

According to some prominent ethicists, the destruction of these "pluripotent" cells derived from adult cells may be no different than the destruction of embryos, since the pluripotent cells are essentially no different than human embryos.

The report concludes saying, "there has been tremendous scientific progress of late in exploring methods of deriving pluripotent stem cells without destroying embryos...With continued support for non-destructive alternatives, new developments will continue to unfold in this field in the years to come, holding the potential for innovative progress toward new medical cures, while at the same time upholding human dignity and the sanctity of innocent life."

Read "Advancing Stem Cell Science Without Destroying Human Life" by the Domestic Policy Council:
http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/healthcare/stemcell_010907.pdf

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