



## DAILY WOMEN'S HEALTH POLICY REPORT

**BIOETHICS & SCIENCE | *San Francisco Chronicle* Examines Efforts To Revise Rules Prohibiting Paying Women for Donated Eggs**  
[Aug. 1, 2008]

The ***San Francisco Chronicle*** on Wednesday examined efforts by human embryonic stem cell research advocates to revise rules that prohibit compensating women for donating their eggs for such research. Some advocates argue that the research is "[f]acing a human egg shortage," which is "fueled by the payment ban" and "preventing medical breakthroughs," the *Chronicle* reports.

According to the *Chronicle*, although fertility clinics pay for eggs, the **California Institute for Regenerative Medicine** -- which was approved by California voters in 2004 to invest \$3 billion in taxpayer funds over 10 years into embryonic stem cell research -- specifically bans compensating women for donating their eggs to research. In addition, Massachusetts bans payments for eggs by law, and **National Academy of Sciences** guidelines advise against payments, the *Chronicle* reports. Supporters of such bans say that they are necessary to avoid creating a market for human eggs that encourages women to risk their health for "speculative science," the *Chronicle* reports. However, opponents of the bans argue that they are creating shortages of eggs, which is what has kept scientists from making advances that prove the potential of stem cell research.

According to the *Chronicle*, the debate "centers" on a technique, known as human somatic cell nuclear transfer, sometimes referred to as therapeutic cloning (Wohlsen, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 7/30). Somatic cell nuclear transfer involves removing the nucleus of an unfertilized egg cell, replacing it with the material from the nucleus of a "somatic cell" -- a skin, heart or nerve cell, for example -- and stimulating this cell to begin dividing in order to grow stem cells (***Daily Women's Health Policy Report***, 6/13). According to critics of the technique, compensating women for donating eggs could create a conflict of interest for those retrieving the eggs. They argue that if funds are transferred, physicians who are responsible for the health of the egg donors also would have a financial incentive to produce as many eggs as possible.

CIRM President Alan Trounson disagreed and suggested that the egg-payment ban is hindering therapeutic cloning research. Kevin Eggan, a researcher at Harvard Stem Cell Institute, said that a \$100,000 advertising campaign seeking charitable egg donations brought in just one egg. "We have literally pursued every option," Eggan said. However, Marcy Darnovsky of the **Center for Genetics and Society** said, "Do we really want to put women at risk to provide raw materials for research a lot of scientists say really isn't the way to go?"

Sam Wood -- chief executive of **Stemagen**, a biotechnology company that was denied funding for therapeutic cloning from CIRM -- said, "You need to have enough eggs to make this thing work, and when you have enough eggs it does work." He added, "If these guidelines weren't in place, we'd already have many (stem cell) lines and be much closer to a treatment for devastating illnesses for which these are so well suited." Wood said, "You have to give people the tools that are required to determine whether the methodology will work" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 7/30).