

An Update on Stem Cells

At SDB

In view of the confusion surrounding embryonic and adult stem cells found among the non-specialists, SDB past President Dr. Brigid Hogan will chair a discussion session addressing this topic at the upcoming annual meeting in Boston. Confirmed discussants are Dr. Meri Firpo of UCSF and Dr. Ron McKay of NIH.

At NIH

Last fall, Dr. Elias Zerhouni, Director of the NIH, formed a [Stem Cell Task Force](#) to assist scientists who want to use human stem cells for research and appointed Dr. Jim Battey the Chair of the Task Force. Dr. Battey will be at the upcoming SDB Annual Meeting to tell us more about the activities of this task force and respond to questions. The [Stem Cell Registry](#) has been updated and now lists 9 cell lines that have been characterized and meet the criteria for federally funded research.

An Update on Cloning

The **Society for Developmental Biology** has extended its [moratorium](#) on cloning of a human being for another 5 years.

With the new Congress, the 108th, and many new members in both the House and the Senate, old bills were revitalized and the Representatives took a fast track to vote on a ban on both cloning of humans for reproductive purposes and use of the technology, i.e., somatic cell nuclear transfer, for research and therapeutic purposes. On February 27, the U.S. House of Representatives approved [H.R. 534](#), the Human Cloning Prohibition Act of 2003, by a vote of 241-155. This legislation was sponsored by David Weldon (R-FL) and Bart Stupak (D-MI).

Two bills were introduced into the Senate, one, [S. 245](#), introduced by Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS), Mary Landrieu (D-LA) and others, is similar to the one approved in the House; the other, [S. 303](#), introduced by Senators Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Diane Feinstein (D-CA), Arlen Specter (R-PA) and Tom Harkin (D-IA), bans reproductive cloning but allows use of SCNT to obtain stem cells for therapeutic and research uses. No date has been set for hearings or discussion.

In case you want to tell your Senator how you want him/her to vote, you will find contact information at <http://www.faseb.org/opar/lac/congress.html>.