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Eve Herold of the Genetics Policy Institute discusses whether the U.S. should fund embryonic stem cell research.

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## Experts debate funds for stem-cell research

### Discussion based on whether U.S. should give money to projects

**By: St. John Barned-Smith**

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One side called it necessary to the advancement of science. The other compared it to killing nursing-home patients with an AK-47.

Last night before an audience of about 80 people in the Bodek Lounge of Houston Hall, conservative pundit and author Ramesh Ponnuru and genetic-research advocate Eve Herold battled back and forth over the merits and pitfalls of embryonic stem cell research in "The Great Stem Cell Debate," sponsored by Penn for Life and Penn Students for Stem Cell Research.

Professor William LaFleur of the East Asian Studies department served as moderator.

Herold argued for stem-cell research, saying that "it's cutting edge in terms of science, its cutting edge in terms of ethical issues [and] political realignments."

Herold also called stem-cell research a "democratic issue."

"Should we have research that represents the wishes of the majority of the population?" she asked. "Currently, we don't have that in America."

Herold then tried to dispel common myths about stem-cell research and argued that, in an age of technology, we need to be prepared to make difficult decisions.

Ponnuru countered that current pro stem cell thinking is "crisis thinking," which, if allowed, means that, "in effect, there should be no stops and no rules."

Ponnuru said he believes that embryos are human organisms that deserve the same protection as other forms of human life.

If not all people get the same right to not be murdered, he said, then the idea that all humans are equal becomes a "self evident lie."

Finally, Ponnuru said he worried about the dangers of accepting embryos as "surplus," because "to do so gives us a reason to violate the most fundamental human right - of not being deliberately killed."

"I thought they made some very interesting points. I don't feel like Herold clarified where the line [in stem-cell research] is OK. What makes a human human?" College freshman Hannah Sheldon said.

"I thought it was an excellent debate," said College senior Ben Weinberg, president of Students for Stem Cell Research.

Weinberg added, however, that he thought a lot of Ponnuru's points were "particularly weak" and "failed to answer yes-or-no questions on the fate of IVF embryos frozen for research."

College sophomore and new president of Penn for Life Racquel Skold said she "was pleased with the debate."

"They were very intellectual and logical people, Ramesh presented his argument well, and it was appropriate for the audience," she said.

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