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06/06/06 NEWS RELEASE

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STANFORD Q&A: WISCONSIN GOV. JIM DOYLE ON STEM CELL ADVOCACY

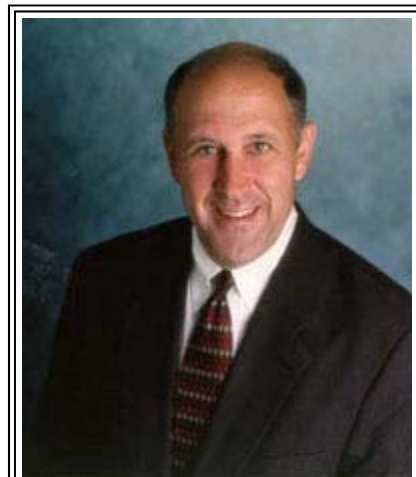
STANFORD, Calif. — Scientists at the University of Wisconsin have played a leading role in advancing the understanding of embryonic stem cells, and Gov. Jim Doyle is a strong proponent of their work. Doyle has not only vetoed legislation that would criminalize such research, he also has made millions of dollars available to encourage the development of this field in his state. Doyle will be speaking at 7 p.m. June 10 at a national [stem cell advocacy conference at Stanford](#). As a preview to his talk, he provided some thoughts about the politics of stem cell research.

Question: Is the potential economic benefit of stem cell work the main reason you are promoting this field in Wisconsin?

Doyle: The primary motivation is the hope for cures for illnesses that we long thought to be incurable and, to me, it is just an incredible win-win opportunity for a state like Wisconsin: To not only be focused on doing some great things for the people of the world but also being able to develop a significant segment of our economy around it.

Wisconsin has been named repeatedly as one of hottest spots in the country for biotech investment, and we've have had a lot of [venture capitalists], particularly in the last couple of years, that are coming here. With stem cells, we have seen some [interest], but I think we all realize that we're still a little ways away from seeing significant commercial applications.

Although we're still at the basic science level, we have already given a grant to a start-up stem cell company involved in developing heart cells for testing of drugs. I have also directed our Department of Commerce to use \$5 million directed specifically at attracting and helping to start companies that are involved in and businesses that are involved in stem cell science and technology.



Listen as Paul Costello, executive director of Communications & Public Affairs, interviews Wisconsin Gov. Jim Doyle.

We recognize that this is going to be a big segment of the economy, a big area of growth in the coming years. It is estimated [to be] as much as \$100 billion over the next 10 years, and I have challenged Wisconsin to capture 10 percent of that. I think that's a very achievable goal.

Q: What about the opposition to stem cell research in Wisconsin?

Doyle: Unfortunately, it is very ambitious, and it is quite well-organized. Although we have one of the greatest concentrations of cross-disciplinary scientists working in the area of stem cell research—the University of Wisconsin is where the first embryonic stem cells were cultured and reproduced, and where the staff on a research foundation owns the licensing rights to about half of the existing stem cell lines and to quite a number of the processes involved—we also have a legislature that actually passed a bill that would have outlawed the next stage of therapeutic cloning, in this state. That would have driven a lot of great scientists out of here.

The bishops in the state are speaking out, you know, trying to persuade me to change my position, and the legislature has bought into that extreme view of things.

Still, I think that the will of the people of Wisconsin is pretty clear, and I've been able not only to stop all of the bad stuff they've tried to do, but we've also been able as to move ahead very aggressively in Wisconsin in the development of our Institutes for Discovery and the other initiatives directed

Q: As a Catholic did you ever think you would be at odds with the Catholic Church? Is that a difficult position for you to be in as governor and also a Roman Catholic?

Doyle: To me, as a Catholic, when I read the gospels and see what Jesus was doing, he was curing people. I don't want to get overly theological about this, but I think that scientific discovery is one of the great gifts God has given us and that we are now doing the most basic science research that will have benefits in so many different ways.

I just can't imagine turning my back on the parents of children that have juvenile diabetes, or families like mine—my mother suffered from Parkinson's for many, many years—I can't imagine turning my back on those families and saying that we here in Wisconsin in particular, given what has happened here, and the kind of research that has happened here, that we would walk away from that. I couldn't do that as the governor of a state. I have not only my own personal and moral beliefs about this, but I also have an obligation to the people of Wisconsin.

This is something for a variety of reasons in which Wisconsin has moved center-stage. We have a special obligation to make sure that we pursue it on behalf of all of those families that are grappling with these very difficult illnesses.

Q: What are some major political lessons you've learned from your work on stem cell policy?

Doyle: It is important that people understand what this issue is because the other side really wants to obscure it; they want to co-opt the term "stem cell research" and they want to pretend that research on adult stem cells is not only equivalent but also superior to embryonic stem cell research. Scientists who have talked to me say these are two different approaches both yielding significant potential, but that the embryonic stem cell research has the potential vastly surpassing adult stem cells. We have to make sure that the issue is clearly defined. I think once the issue is clearly defined, public opinion is overwhelmingly on the side of allowing these researchers to do their work and, I hope, cure illnesses.

Q: How does the stem cell effort in Wisconsin compare with what's going on in California?

Doyle: It is just different because we have a much smaller state and a state that is dominated by one very large research institution. We are in the process of developing our Institutes of Discovery, a \$150 million public-private research institution in which the university and private enterprise will be able to work together on research. I think we have developed a really good model here, and we have the advantage, I guess you would say, of being a smaller state and one in which our resources are much more centralized and focused.

Q: When you're speaking at conferences centered about energizing activists, is there one message you hope to leave your audience?

Doyle: Yes. It is that we really have to be vigilant on this. This has moved out of the laboratories and into the political world. California certainly has demonstrated this with its Proposition 71, but it's true in Wisconsin and it is true in other places. Those who feel strongly about the potential of this research have to be very, very actively engaged in this as a political issue. I think that in California, people understand that probably a little better than people in most places. I think we understand this in Wisconsin because we have been on the cutting edge of this but I think people around the country have to understand this. You would think, "Boy, here are scientists trying to cure illnesses, who would be against that?" But there is, in fact, a very forceful, very strong, politically effective opposition.

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