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# Michael J. Fox, supporter of stem cell research, stumps for Kerry in Miami

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At a Miami Beach home crowded with people in wheelchairs sporting John Kerry buttons, actor, Parkinson's Disease patient and stem cell-research activist Michael J. Fox on Tuesday likened President Bush's limits on federal research funding to giving someone a car without any gas to make it run.

"But he's congratulating himself on giving us the car, so we sit there stuck," said Fox, who is stumping for Democratic presidential hopeful John Kerry. "One doesn't have to be cynical to take a dim view of that and be frustrated by that."

Fox, who established The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research four years ago, spoke at the home of Evelyne and Jack Cohen.

Their daughter, Sabrina Cohen, 26, has been a quadriplegic since she was involved in a drag-racing accident 12 years ago as a back-seat passenger not wearing a seatbelt.

Now she's public relations director for the Genetics Policy Institute in Coral Gables, and a Democratic precinct chairwoman.

Last April, she met Bernard Siegel, the institute's founder, at a conference and decided to get involved.

"For years, my father has been giving me articles about stem cell research and I said to him: 'When they find a cure, let them call me...' The possibilities for not only spinal cord injuries but diabetes and everything else are so great.

"We're not saying that in five years we're promising you cures; we're saying it has the potential and we're just asking for it to be explored."

Fox, who said that stress was aggravating his symptoms, rocked and weaved in a straight-backed chair, his words sometimes tumbling out in a rush.

Using one of Kerry's signature phrases, he said that Bush "made the wrong choices when it comes to stem cell research and taken us in the wrong direction...George Bush let ideology, not science, guide his decision making. I believe this was a grave mistake."

In a speech on Aug. 9, 2001, Bush placed embryonic stem cell research "at the leading edge of a series of moral hazards."

He acknowledged that it ``offers great promise that could help improve the lives of those who suffer from many terrible diseases...And while scientists admit they are not yet certain, they believe stem cells derived from embryos have unique potential."

Then he announced that the federal government would only fund further research on ``more than 60 genetically diverse stem cell lines [that] already exist...where the life and death decision has already been made."

Fox pointed out that many Republicans, including Sen. John McCain of Arizona, have joined a majority of Democrats -- including Florida's senators, Bob Graham and Bill Nelson -- in asking Bush to lift the restrictions, ``but he refused."

Kerry, he said, ``understands that we must permit and support this research and not thwart it. He'll...increase funding at the National Institutes of Health to create research grants and training opportunities for young scientists to encourage them to enter this field."