

Stem cells

The Viewpoint in this issue by Tsonis (pages 81–83) discusses a recent report of a chemical compound (reversine) that promotes the reversal of a myotube phenotype. This provides a potential new approach for the therapeutic use of stem cells derived from adult tissues. Clearly, a major ethical debate is underway in this country regarding different strategies for tissue engineering and cellular therapeutics. The **International Society of Stem Cell Research** has an excellent Web site that outlines news in stem cell studies (<http://www.isscr.org>). In addition to their discussions of scientific issues related to this topic, they also have a page devoted to the **Ethics of Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research**, with links to a number of articles and perspectives (<http://www.isscr.org/public/ethics.htm>). An alternative view on embryonic stem cell research is also presented at <http://www.stemcellresearch.org>.

Given the publicity and controversy, many other sites provide information about stem cells. A University of Wisconsin biologist, James Thompson, reported the first human embryonic stem cells that opened this chapter in research. That University has a useful site with news and some good background information on various aspects of **Embryonic Stem Cells** (<http://www.news.wisc.edu/packages/stemcells>) as well as adult-derived stem cells. A site with a more popular focus (though getting a bit old) can be found from Time magazine's presentation of **The Stem Cell Debate** (<http://www.time.com/time/2001/stem-cells>). For the official government view, the NIH has a Web page on **Stem Cell Information** (<http://stemcells.nih.gov/index.asp>), which includes information about stem cells in general as well as the list of lines officially sanctioned for use with NIH funds. The most recent contribution to the controversy in this area is the development of a number of new embryonic stem cell lines (without government funding) by Harvard researcher **Douglas A. Melton** (<http://mcb.harvard.edu/melton>). These lines are being made available to researchers (see <http://www.mcb.harvard.edu/melton/hues/>) but for the moment, no federal funds can be used to study them.

Science policy

Another area of controversy recently has been questions about the degree to which public policy makers may be manipulating or interfering with scientific panels to foster

particular viewpoints. One group that has for years raised scientific concerns about public decision making is the **Union of Concerned Scientists** (<http://www.ucsusa.org>). They devote significant space on their site to recent concerns raised by scientists that their opinions are being stifled. A section devoted to **Restoring Scientific Integrity** has been added recently (http://www.ucsusa.org/global_environment/rsi/index.html). In addition to scientists raising concerns, even members of Congress have raised related concerns of **Politics & Science** (<http://www.house.gov/reform/min/politicsandscience>). It is clear that partisan politics may contribute to the noise in this arena but the number of recent news reports on this topic is unusual. Finally, the AAAS has number of projects and publications about **Science & Policy Programs** (<http://www.aaas.org/spp>).

Miscellanea

This month's interview with Nobel Laureate Robert Furchgott (pages 74–78) suggests a tour of the **Nobel e-Museum** (<http://www.nobel.se>). The site includes the history of the Nobel Prize and names of all winners. For fun, you can play games, see simulations, or even take a virtual stroll around the Karolinska Nobel Forum where the prize in Physiology or Medicine is decided.

Ever been left to wonder over an obscure medical acronym? Check out the **Medi Lexicon** (<http://www.medi-lexicon.com>; formerly Pharma-Lexicon).

It will help you find out about medical abbreviations, pharmaceutical companies, clinical trials, etc. It has a very long list of possible searches that initiate your query on other sites that specialize in those areas. This site may be one of the best "Swiss army knife" locations for finding information about drugs and medical topics.

Stem cell graphic courtesy of Douglas Melton.

