C.S. Mott Children's Hospital
National Poll on Children's Health

Child Health Evaluation and Research Unit
University of Michigan
University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children's Hospital

Vol. 5 Issue 2 ■ October 20, 2008

A publication from C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, the University of Michigan Department of Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases, and the University of Michigan Child Health Evaluation and Research (CHEAR) Unit

Knowledge Key to Support for Embryonic Stem Cell Research

Stem cells are a powerful tool for research that may lead to major medical breakthroughs. Research in animals indicates that stem cells may provide the opportunity to replace parts of people's bodies that are damaged or not working correctly. Stem cell therapy could someday treat problems for children and adults, such as brain diseases, cancer, and diabetes.

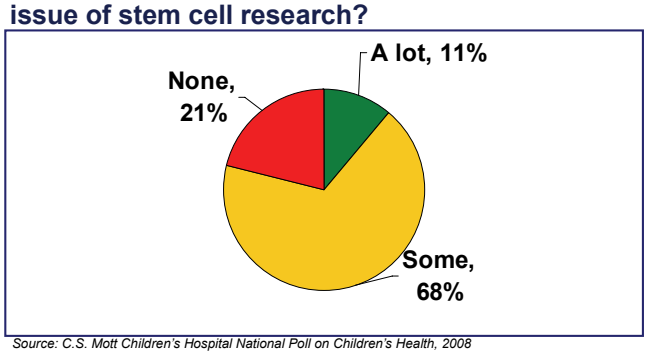
However, embryonic stem cell research remains controversial. It uses human embryos from fertility programs that were not used to start pregnancies. Supporters of embryonic stem cell research say that using these embryos potentially gives medical benefits to others, and that most of the embryos would be destroyed anyway. Opponents of embryonic stem cell research say that destroying an embryo for research is not acceptable because the embryo is a potentially viable human life.

In August 2008, the CS Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health asked voters (those likely or very likely to vote in the next election) how much they know about the issue of stem cell research, whether they would be interested in learning more, and if they believe embryonic stem cell research should be allowed. Voters were also asked if they preferred state versus national laws for embryonic stem cell research and who should perform this type of research.

Knowledge About Stem Cell Research

Only 11% of voters say they know a lot about stem cell research, 68% report having some knowledge and 21% do not know anything about it (Figure 1).

Figure 1. **How much do you know about the issue of stem cell research?**



Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, 2008

Report Highlights

- **Only 11% of voters think they know a lot about stem cell research.**
- **About one-half of voters think embryonic stem cell research should be allowed.**
- **72% of voters favor national over state laws for stem cell research.**

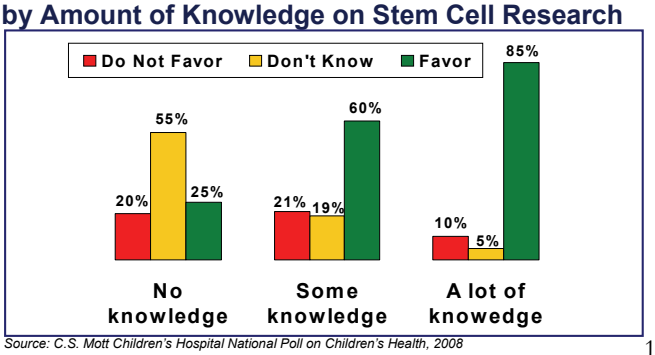
Among voters, 68% are interested in learning more about the issue of stem cell research.

Support for Embryonic Stem Cell Research

Overall, 56% of voters believe embryonic stem cell research should be allowed, 20% think it should not be allowed and 24% of voters are unsure.

The more knowledge voters have on the subject of stem cell research, the greater their support for it. 85% of voters who have a lot of knowledge on stem cell research believe it should be allowed, and 60% of those who have some knowledge on the subject would support it, while only 25% of those with no knowledge on stem cell research would support it (Figure 2).

Figure 2. **Support for Embryonic Stem Cell Research by Amount of Knowledge on Stem Cell Research**



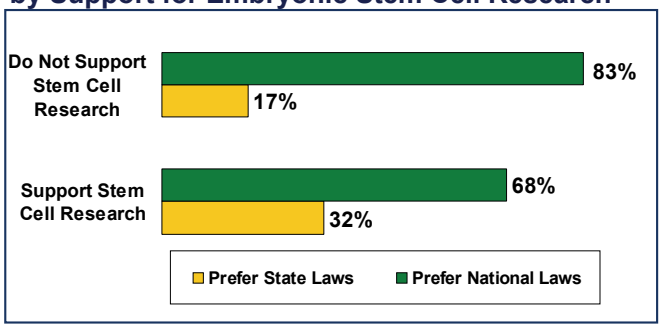
Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, 2008

Voters without children in the household are more likely to support embryonic stem cell research (59%) than are voters with children in the household (47%).

State Versus National Laws for Stem Cell Research

Currently, only a few states permit embryonic stem cell research. Voters were asked if they preferred that each state have its own laws on embryonic stem cell research or that there be national laws. Overall, voters strongly prefer national laws (72%) over state laws (28%). Of note, state laws were favored to a greater extent by those who support stem cell research than by those who do not (Figure 3).

Figure 3. **Preference for State vs. National Laws by Support for Embryonic Stem Cell Research**

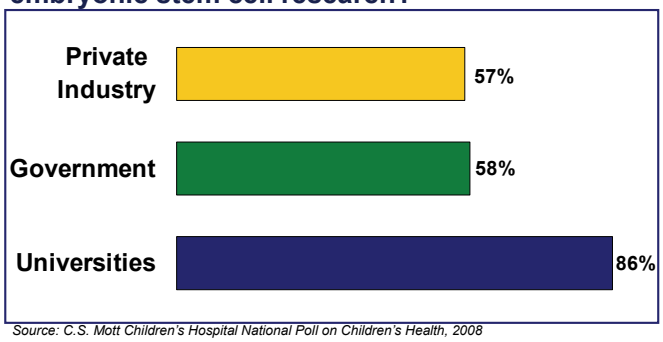


Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, 2008

Who Should Perform Stem Cell Research

Voters who support embryonic stem research were asked who they think should perform this type of research. More than one-half of these voters believe that private industry and government should be allowed to perform embryonic stem cell research, while 86% believe universities should be allowed to do so (Figure 4).

Figure 4. **Who should be allowed to perform embryonic stem cell research?**



Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, 2008

Implications

Results of this poll indicate that only a small percentage of voters think that they currently know a lot about stem cell research. The majority of voters indicated they would like to know more about stem cell research, which presents an opportunity for programs that wish to enhance the public's understanding of this complex issue.

As shown in this poll, greater understanding may be key to support for embryonic stem cell initiatives. More than one-half of voters support embryonic stem cell research, and the more knowledge they have on the subject the greater their support.

A strong majority of voters overall prefer federal over state laws for stem cell research. However, supporters of embryonic stem cell research are less likely to favor federal laws, possibly because federal statutes currently limit this research. Some states have legislation pending on stem cell research, and Michigan voters will decide the on future use of embryos and embryonic stem cell research in November. People who want to learn more about this issue can visit http://nationalacademies.org/stemcells

Universities received the most support from voters as sites for stem cell research. This may be an important factor as voters consider laws about this controversial area of research.

Data Source

This report presents findings from a nationally representative household survey conducted exclusively by Knowledge Networks, Inc, for C.S. Mott Children's Hospital via a method used in many published studies. The survey was administered from August 1-31 to a randomly selected, stratified group of adults aged 18 and older (n=2,245) with and without children from the Knowledge Networks standing panel that closely resembles the U.S. population. The sample was subsequently weighted to reflect population figures from the Census Bureau. The survey completion rate was 62% among panel members contacted to participate. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Child Health Evaluation and Research Unit
University of Michigan

C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health
Director: Matthew M. Davis, MD, MAPP
Associate Director: Sarah J. Clark, MPH
Manager & Editor: Dianne C. Singer, MPH
Data Analyst: Amy T. Butchart, MPH
Contact us! Email: NPCH@med.umich.edu
http://www.med.umich.edu/mott/npch