

Statement on Stem Cells, Gene Therapy, and Cloning - 2002

In December 2001, delegates to the WRJ 43rd Assembly adopted the resolution Complete Health: Mental and Physical, which addressed issues related to stem cell research. In April 2002, representatives of Women of Reform Judaism participated in an informative conference held by the Religious Action Center for members of the Commission on Social Action and the UAHC Department of Family Concerns, in an attempt to become aware of the most recent research advances and to further address policy issues in the areas of stem cell research, gene therapy, and cloning.

Pending legislation and the current administration's positions on these issues indicate that congressional action is imminent. In order to advocate on these issues the Women of Reform Judaism Executive Committee supports the following policy positions taken on Tuesday, November 19, 2002 by the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism.

Consistent with the values of Reform Judaism, and recommendations of that working group, at this time the Commission on Social Action:

1. Supports research using both adult and embryonic stem cells, not limited to the existing lines currently approved for funding by the Administration;
2. Supports research and funding of somatic gene therapy. Each individual can assess the risks and benefits for him or herself and make an informed decision. Support for somatic gene therapy should not be confused with or construed as support for germline gene therapy, which poses serious medical and moral concerns;
3. Supports therapeutic cloning; and
4. Opposes reproductive cloning.

Women of Reform Judaism will prepare a comprehensive resolution on these concerns for the WRJ 44th Assembly, in consultation with the Commission on Social Action and the Department of Jewish Family Concerns, to further develop policies and guidelines for Women of Reform Judaism. If adopted, the resolution adopted by the WRJ 44th Assembly will subsume this Executive Committee statement