RESOLUTION 6 — 2013
Regular Winter Session
PENDING WAIVER OF PRIOR NOTICE
Submitted by
AVMA Executive Board

REVISED POLICY ON PLURIPOTENT STEM CELLS

RESOLVED, that the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) adopt the revised policy on Pluripotent Stem Cells, as noted below (additions are underlined; deletions are struck through):

Pluripotent Stem Cells
Pluripotent stem cells hold great potential for the development of new and exciting therapeutic strategies in the fight against diseases and injuries of animals and humans. Veterinarians have made fundamental contributions to the understanding of the biological potential and clinical use of stem cells, including early studies on mouse embryonic stem cells, derivation of the first human stem cell line, and foundation studies that led to the development of induced pluripotent stem cells. Research into the biology of animal and human stem cells continues to proceed at a breathtaking pace, although the full clinical potential of stem cell therapies remains years away. The AVMA recognizes the promising impact that research on stem cells will have on a diverse array of clinical applications in veterinary and human medical care.

Translation of laboratory studies into effective and useful clinical treatment is critical to the development and acceptance of a novel therapy. A key tool in defining the real value of novel therapy is the randomized clinical trial. Such trials are characterized by randomization of treatment, allocation concealment, blinding of investigators during collection of outcome data, and sufficient patient numbers to allow precise analysis of treatment effects.

Therefore, the AVMA takes the following position on the study and use of stem cells:
• The AVMA fully supports and encourages the ethical study of animal stem cells, including embryonic, induced pluripotent, and adult stem cells, as well as the development of regenerative therapies achieved through directed transdifferentiation of somatic cells to defined precursors. Such studies, performed under the rigorous guidelines of the Animal Welfare Act, have enormous promise for the development of safe and effective stem cell-based therapies for the benefit of animal and human health.
• The AVMA endorses the use of scientifically-validated stem cells in pre-clinical models of animal and human diseases. Such studies may minimize religious or political constraints associated with the use of human embryonic stem cells and facilitate critical advances in the use of pluripotent stem cells in the treatment of disease or injury common to humans and animals such as spinal injury or diabetes.
• The AVMA endorses studies on stem cells that are in full accordance with the Guidelines for Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research as published in 2005 and modified in 2009 by the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences.
• The AVMA recognizes that the protection of animal welfare, as set forth in the Animal Welfare Act and by regulatory (eg, Public Health Service) and other recognized entities (eg, Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care International [AAALAC]), must always apply during the course of research involving animals.
• The AVMA recognizes the need for rigorous critical testing of the clinical effectiveness of scientifically-validated stem cell therapies for the treatment of animal disease. Implementation of stem cell therapies in veterinary medicine should only be based on evidence of efficacy and safety.
• The AVMA supports the use of stem cell therapies that have been demonstrated to be safe and effective to treat animal disease based on evidence derived from scientifically-valid and randomized clinical trials.
Statement about the Resolution

The policy on Pluripotent Stem Cells was last revised in June 2011. Given both the rapidly changing nature of the field, as well as the ever-increasing usage of stem cells in veterinary practice, the current policy has been updated as noted above. Specific emphasis is placed on the experimental nature of the use of stem cells for many conditions and advising that the use of stem cells in clinical cases be based upon scientifically-derived information that demonstrates both efficacy and safety. Further, the descriptor “pluripotent” is removed as it could be interpreted as limiting the scope of this policy to a certain subset of stem cells.

Financial Impact: None

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