THOMAS VAN LIESHOUT
Guest commentary

Gains made with adult stem-cell research

For the past few weeks, there has been a great deal of publicity regarding the stem-cell controversy. Whether it is our governor advertising a pie in the sky, or the voting in the Senate, I feel it is important for people to examine the facts.

Gov. Doyle's reasoning is that Wisconsin should not fall behind in the research. Too bad. We are already behind many schools involved with adult stem-cell research. For more than 20 years, scientists have been working on embryonic stem-cell research with no positive results on any diseases or illnesses. If one goes to the Internet, he would find the projections are actually devastating.

Paul Billings, a co-founder of a stem-cell bank: "Major new medical treatments based on embryonic stem-cell research are very remote." Further, "The problems are so complex that we are not likely to tackle them in the foreseeable future."

Dr. Richard Burt: "It will be at least two or three generations before there is a breakthrough."

While Harvard Medical School is now touting fetal stem-cell research, the school's own studies indicate adult stem-cell research may eliminate the need for embryonic stem cell research. To verify this material, log on to www.lifenew.com and go to diabetes and adult stem-cell research.

Diane Irving, a biochemist with the National Cancer Institute: "I have argued that

adult stem cells are better — there is a far less chance of genetic error — and less side effects for the patient to deal with."

Needless to say, I am enthusiastic when adult stem-cell research is mentioned.

There is a situation with which I am actively involved: Last fall, I faced the possibility of amputation of my right leg because of circulatory problems. Because of previous surgeries, I had no veins left to harvest, and further surgery was impossible. Either live with the pain, or cut off the leg.

Luckily, I knew of the experimental arterial program at Northwestern University.

In January, I entered the research center for eight days. In a four-hour procedure much like dialysis, they extracted more than a million stem cells from my blood. Using a computerized magnet, they separated the stem cells that affect the arteries in the right leg. Twenty-five of these cells were then injected into my calf and thigh.

I was the seventh person in the country to go through the program. Last fall, I had trouble walking 100 yards. Three days after the injections, I walked three blocks. Today I can walk almost a half-mile and can jog a block. To most people this accomplishment is trivial but, when faced with the alternative, it is great.

My case, one of many, is an example of how far adult stem-cell research has progressed.

Recently, we again listened to our leader extol the merits of embryonic stem-cell research and its projections into the future while ignoring what is happening in medical science today.

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