



The discussion about stem cell research has moved out of the scientific into the political arena as it inevitably must do. Unfortunately, neither researchers nor politicians are unbiased and it is difficult to assess the arguments since both have at stake, not only the benefit to patients, but the benefit to politicians seeking reelection and researchers seeking research grants. One thing is clear from politicians and researchers alike. Both present their case in the name of suffering peoples with the sense of urgency that asks approval for whatever it takes to heal diseases targeted by stem cell research. Although one can understand the hardship suffered by the disabled, the chronically ill and the dying, research done today will hardly benefit many alive among us. Research takes time. The transition from laboratory success to bedside therapy takes time. Protocols need to be developed. Failures and set backs are sure to be experienced.

The current sense of urgency is not unlike the urgency pressed upon family members in the Intensive Care Lounge where decisions are called for immediately not because the situation is life-threatening but because the physician is leaving for vacation, or the nursing shift is about to change, or the hospital needs the bed for a newly admitted patient. Most dilemmas do not present a situation requiring a decision immediately, in fact, sometimes delay itself resolves the issue. The urgency pressed upon us by politicians and researchers is worth at least as much in gain for them as it is for patients who will probably never benefit from stem cell research (if anyone does) in their lifetime. All caring for sick people considered, the issues presented by embryonic stem cell research invites us to take our time and think clear

