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## **Abortion-Derived Fetal Tissue Research: Questions and Answers**

### **What do Assembly Bill 305 and Senate Bill 260 seek to accomplish?**

These companion bills seek to protect the exploitation of unborn human life by outlawing the use of fetal body parts from induced abortions (i.e., where the child is directly and deliberately killed), regardless of whether any financial payments are involved. The bills mandate that those who perform an abortion ensure that the body is laid to rest by means of “burial, interment, entombment, cremation, or incineration.” The penalty for violating the ban is a fine not to exceed \$50,000, imprisonment not to exceed six years, or both. This penalty is the same as the one for trafficking in human organs.

### **Why prohibit the use of fetal tissue from induced abortions?**

The unborn fetus is a human being with a right to life. To directly terminate her life by means of an induced abortion is unjust. To view her as useful only for her body parts further degrades and dehumanizes her.

Second, the dependence of fetal tissue research on the abortion industry helps to legitimize abortion and to further embed it in our educational and medical institutions. Fetal tissue from abortions gives these institutions a vested interest in ensuring that abortions do not decline, let alone disappear.

### **Does this mean that all fetal tissue research in Wisconsin will be suddenly outlawed if the bills become law?**

No. Existing fetal tissue obtained prior to January 1, 2015, can still be used by Wisconsin researchers and the use of fetal tissue obtained from miscarriages and still births will continue to be legal.

### **But weren't vaccines to prevent polio and other diseases derived from aborted fetuses?**

Yes, but the fact that important discoveries in the past were made in an unethical manner does not mean that we have to continue to do so today, especially when ethical alternatives exist. In the mid-twentieth century, [U.S. researchers](#) made scientific advances by experimenting on children with disabilities. Today those experiments are universally regarded as unethical.

Science could discover all kinds of things and with much greater speed if there were no ethical limits on human experimentation, but ethical limits exist to make certain that vulnerable members of the human family are not exploited.

### **Aren't opponents of this research imposing their religion or ethics on medical researchers?**

No. Our human reason and our Constitution teach us that every human being has an inalienable right to life, from which all other rights flow. Human reason also tells us that it is wrong to intentionally kill innocent human beings. The human fetus is an innocent member of our human family. To destroy a child and then use him for scientific experimentation is to deny him the full respect he deserves.

**But researchers say that they follow strict ethical guidelines in obtaining fetal tissue, including ensuring that they have the consent of the women who are obtaining abortions.**

It is very difficult to ensure that current guidelines are truly being followed. First, because recent undercover videos reveal that 1) abortion techniques are sometimes altered to produce the most desirable fetal specimens; and 2) some women are allegedly being coerced into giving their consent or are not fully informed about what will be done with their children's remains.

Second, an aborted unborn child did not consent to his or her destruction. Full respect for our aborted brothers and sisters demands that they receive a proper burial, not dissection and experimentation.

### **If abortion is legal and if the aborted fetus will be discarded anyway, isn't it better to use it to find life-saving cures for others?**

It is never right to commit evil, even if good can come out of it. You cannot take one life in order to save another. Human beings must never be treated as a means to an end, however noble. Even today, reputable scientists refuse to use the data collected by Nazi experimenters out of respect for their victims.

### **Why are politicians interfering in what is essentially an ethical and scientific issue? Isn't the scientific community self-regulated?**

If one looks at the history of scientific experimentation in the U.S., it is evident that self-regulation within the scientific community did not always adequately protect vulnerable populations. Instead, public outrage demanded and obtained legislative action. For example, the researchers who conducted the infamous [Tuskegee Syphilis Study](#) and the hepatitis study at the [Willowbrook State School](#) strongly defended their actions and denied they were acting unethically. However, public pressure halted the studies and spurred Congress to pass legislation protecting human subjects in medical research and granting civil rights to people with disabilities.

### **Won't restrictions on this research result in lost jobs and a weaker Wisconsin economy?**

It is true that Wisconsin's biotech industry and the University of Wisconsin-Madison are both invested in this type of research, but this is not a sufficient reason to allow it to continue. No one really knows if significant job losses will truly come to pass, especially since AB 305 and SB 260 allow use of existing fetal tissues, giving researchers time to develop ethical alternatives.

Furthermore, if enacted, the new law will no doubt lead to new discoveries and attract new researchers and biotech firms. Indeed, the 2007 creation of induced pluripotent stem cells (iPS) at the UW-Madison and the University of Kyoto was made possible in part because of [the desire to find ethical alternatives](#) to human embryonic stem cells. Today the iPS industry is worth millions of dollars.

Finally, as [a group of Wisconsin researchers](#) point out, the use of abortion-derived fetal tissues and human embryonic stem cells in many Wisconsin laboratories is driving away students who wish to pursue ethical research.

### **What is gained if some of our best researchers leave Wisconsin and continue this research in other states or countries?**

Just because unethical research may continue elsewhere does not justify doing it here. We don't condone medical experimentation on prisoners just because other countries are doing it.

Today, Wisconsin has an extraordinary opportunity to lead the nation by championing research that is ethical, innovative, and effective. Such a commitment to heal without harm would truly uphold our state's proud tradition of social justice and respect for human life.

### **What more can I do?**

- Become educated about the issue.
- Share this information with others in a clear and respectful manner.
- Contact your legislators to support Assembly Bill 305 and Senate Bill 260. Go to <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/> and type in your home address under "Find My Legislators." You can also reach your legislators by calling the Legislative Hotline: in Madison, 266-9960; toll-free, 1-800-362-9472.
- For further information, please email [info@healwithoutharm.org](mailto:info@healwithoutharm.org).