



Menselijke embryo's gekloond ?

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Californian company Stemagen announced on Thursday, 17 January, that it had cloned five human blastocytes (5 to 7-day-old embryos) using adult skin cells and 25 eggs harvested from donors. The researchers had the results verified to ensure they were clones – which proved true for three out of the five embryos – and in so doing, destroyed the embryos.

Through this experiment, the researchers hope to obtain a continuous line of human embryonic stem cells.

“Although this study is an important step in the creation of stem cells for therapeutic cloning, a lot of work still remains to be done to confirm these results and their applications,” pointed out Andrew French, lead author on the paper published in Stem Cells. He also called for caution after the scandal created by the Korean Hwang Woo-Suk who announced he had cloned human embryos in 2004 and extracted embryonic stem cells from them. Dr Hwang’s data had in fact been fabricated.

In 2005, researchers at the University of Newcastle announced they had cloned a human embryo for the first time in Great Britain.

For Bishop Elio Sgreccia, president of the Pontifical Academy for Life, this experiment is “the worst kind of manipulation of the human being, which thereby becomes an object of research”, especially as there are other ways of obtaining pluripotent cells and “until now [embryonic research, editor’s note] has not had any success”.