

# Press Release

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**MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL EDITORIAL, PUBLISHED APRIL 25, 2006**  
**Keeping the Knowledge Here**

Although manufacturing and farming quickly come to mind whenever one thinks of Wisconsin exports, some of the state's most valuable products are its advances in life sciences.

The state must do a much better job of harnessing that scientific capital for its own economic well-being and future prosperity. These issues were outlined in a series of articles this week by Journal Sentinel reporters Kathleen Gallagher and Susanne Rust.

Since research begets more research, which in turn attracts more research dollars and more first-rate scientists from throughout the world, to do anything less would be to let a golden opportunity slip through the state's fingers.

With its groundbreaking work in embryonic stem cell research eight years ago - the first such cells were isolated by University of Wisconsin-Madison biologist James Thomson - and the accomplishments in that field since, Wisconsin is on the threshold of building a lucrative knowledge economy.

Unfortunately, much of the research created here has been exported to other states.

The Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation, or WARF, one of the nation's most successful patenting and licensing operations, has licensed most of UW-Madison's life science technologies to out-of-state firms.

Meanwhile, the State of Wisconsin Investment Board- the 25th biggest pension fund in the world, managing \$76 billion in assets - has made virtually all of its venture capital investments in young firms that focus on places such as the Silicon Valley, Gallagher and Rust reported.

The good news is that steps have been taken recently that could help lay the groundwork for Wisconsin to reap the economic rewards of human embryonic stem cell research and commercialization. They include a commitment by WARF to help develop more embryonic stem cell companies within the state as well as an effort in Madison to create an environment that welcomes entrepreneurs and removes obstacles for new companies.

Gov. Jim Doyle advanced the cause further Tuesday when he wisely ordered that the Department of Commerce spend \$5 million to recruit new stem cell companies with the aim of capturing 10% of the stem cell technology market by 2015.

But the state's investment in this promising technology isn't strictly a business decision; embryonic stem cell research is rife with controversy. Some groups opposed to abortion have argued that since the process to obtain stem cells requires the destruction of discarded embryos, it amounts to taking a human life.

We respect those views but continue to side with proponents, including some nationally prominent Republicans who oppose abortion. Despite significant hurdles and uncertainty, embryonic stem cell research still holds the promise to better understand, and perhaps even cure, an untold number of diseases, including Parkinson's, cancer and diabetes. Society cannot ethically turn its back on the research or impose unreasonable restrictions on public funding.

Adult stem cell research also has promise and already has produced dividends, including bone marrow transplants for cancer patients. But since most scientists believe embryonic stem cells offer far greater potential, it would be a mistake for, the cradle of such research, not to pursue it as vigorously as possible.

**Wisconsin Stem Cell Now, Inc** is a nonprofit organization that seeks to educate the public and lawmakers concerning the benefits of stem cell research, and that advocates continued support of this life-saving research. Wisconsin Stem Cell Now, Inc.- 4230 N. Oakland Ave. #249 - Shorewood, WI 53211-2042