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State Catholic group clarifies church's stance on stem cells

It approves of adult stem cell research, condemns embryonic.

By Stephen Bitsoli

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The Michigan Catholic Conference has launched a massive education program on stem cell research, explaining its position in advance of Respect Life Sunday, according to spokesman Dave Maluchnik. Every registered Catholic home in Michigan will receive a package containing a DVD, brochure and a letter signed by Cardinal Adam Maida and other bishops from throughout the state.

Maluchnik said the kit also has been sent to every parish in the state.

Maluchnik, public policy associate at the Lansing-based organization that serves as the public policy voice of all seven Michigan dioceses, said this campaign was necessary because the "secular media" too often gets the Catholic Church's position wrong.

In a letter to parish priests, the three central messages the Catholic Church wants to communicate are:

- "There are two different types of stem cell research, adult and embryonic."
- "Adult stem-cell research, which does not harm the embryo, is morally permissible and is providing treatments for (more than) 70 different medical conditions. Embryonic stem cell research, which involves the direct killing of human embryos and leads to human cloning, is morally unacceptable and is providing no treatments."
- "The (Catholic) Church is supportive of ethical means to assist the suffering and protect human life through the advances made with adult stem cells."

Most people don't seem to realize there are two types of stem cells, Maluchnik said. "The hype of embryonic stem cell research has overshadowed the advances of adult stem cell research." The "secular media" doesn't publicize these successes, Maluchnik said, while exaggerating the promise of embryonic stem cells, which have so far provided no effective

treatments.

The DVD, "The Science of Stem Cells: Finding Cures and Protecting Life," was produced originally by the Kansas Catholic Conference. With its permission, "we made some significant changes," Maluchnik said, removing some Kansas political information and adding some Michigan content.

The new footage includes interviews with a Wayne State University professor doing research on adult stem cells and two Grand Rapids women who have benefited from adult stem cell research.

While he said he "wouldn't know" the cost of the mailing, Maluchnik added, "You can't put a cost on defending human life from destruction on a massive scale."

For more information on "The Science of Stem Cells" campaign, visit www.micatholicconference.org or call (800) 395-5565.

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