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Stem cell research holds promise of therapy for disorders

Dr Freddie Loh Tak Seng

I MUST congratulate Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for his stand on stem cell research. He also mentioned that a new local company called Stem Life Sdn Bhd had begun operating recently in Cyberjaya using stem cells from umbilical cord blood.

The field of stem cells for application in the area of regenerative medicine holds promise for the development of novel therapies for hitherto incurable disorders. Stem cells can be cultivated from human embryos, umbilical cord blood and adult stem cell buried in the organs, eg. bone marrow, skin, gut and blood.

In striated muscle and the liver, the stem cells proliferate and differentiate essentially under conditions of trauma or stress and are called reserved stem cells.

At the World Congress of Catholic Medical Doctors in September this year held in Seoul, Dr Vescovi, a researcher from a hospital in San Raffoele, Italy, showed how he had isolated neural stem cells from an adult human brain and how these cells differentiated into different types of brain cells.

Some patients with Parkinson's disease showed dramatic improvement when they received transplants of adult stem cells. Since there are other avenues for sourcing stem cells, there is no necessity to culture embryonic stem cells anymore.

This is because embryonic stem cells are derived from embryos which are cultured in vitro and are subsequently destroyed. Each embryo is alive and is therefore a tiny human being. Life is sacred and inviolable and begins from the moment of conception until death. It must be protected.

Researchers who destroy embryos are killing these embryos and all God-fearing persons must not allow them to do so by preventing and stopping