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### **NIH Seeks Feedback on Stem Cell Guidelines**

In response to Executive Order 13505, Removing Barriers to Responsible Scientific Research Involving Human Stem Cells, the NIH has established draft guidelines for human embryonic stem cell research eligible for federal funding. The proposed guidelines allow federally funded research on hESC derived from human embryos that were created for reproductive purposes, were no longer needed for those purposes, and were donated for research. Before federal funds could be used for research on hESC, the funded institution must provide documentation of the validity of the source of cells and of institutional adherence to the Code of Federal Regulations.

The use of NIH funds for the derivation of hESC is still not allowed as according to Public Law 110-161 (the Dickey-Wicker Amendment). Also not allowed is the use of NIH funds for research on hESC derived from other sources, including somatic cell nuclear transfer, parthenogenesis, or IVF embryos created for research purposes.

NIH is accepting comments on its draft guidelines through May 26, 2009. To read the guidelines and to comment, click [here](#).

The full text of Executive Order 13505 is available [here](#).

The Endocrine Society is in the process of revising its 2005 position statement on stem cell research to account for the recent changes in Executive policy. The Society will consider the NIH guidelines and any legislative action that might occur during the revision.

### **Society's Guiding Principles on Health Reform Recommend Needed Changes in System**

To have a voice in the health reform debate and represent the interests of endocrinologists, The Endocrine Society has developed a set of "guiding principles." These [principles](#), which were developed by the Society's Advocacy and Public Outreach Core Committee and the Clinical Affairs Core Committee, outline the components that the Society recommends for inclusion in any federal health reform proposal. The principles document addresses Medicare physician payment, the importance of preventive care, treatment of diabetes and obesity, and increasing the physician workforce, among others. The Endocrine Society will use these principles to frame its discussions with policymakers in Congress and the Administration.

The Society's principles will be of particular importance in the months to come because President Obama and members of Congress have expressed their intent to see comprehensive health reform legislation passed in 2009. The Senate Finance Committee and the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP) are holding a series of roundtable discussions to address specific components of health reform, including the delivery system, insurance coverage, and financing mechanisms. The first roundtable was held on April 21, 2009 and focused on the delivery system reform. To read the witness statements and view the full hearing, please visit the Senate Finance Committee [website](#). Based on this hearing, the Senate Finance Committee released a document describing policy options for reforming the health care delivery system. The [paper](#) outlines proposals to address key physician policy issues such as Medicare physician payment, care coordination, the Physician Quality Improvement Program, and the physician workforce. The Society will share its guiding principles with the Finance Committee and will work with the Committee on shared goals for reform. The Senate Finance Committee and the HELP Committee are separately drafting their own health reform proposals, which they intend to introduce in June.

### **Resources Available to Physicians on FTC Red Flags Rule**

In late 2007, The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) issued a set of regulations known as the Red Flags Rule which requires certain entities to implement written identity theft prevention and detection programs to protect consumers from identity theft. The FTC indicated that this rule applies to all "creditors" and that physicians who accept insurance or allow payment plans are considered to be creditors. The FTC requirements go beyond the privacy protections required under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), which requires protection of personal health information. The Red Flags Rule requires additional protection of credit card information and of tax identification numbers such as social security numbers, among others.

The American Medical Association and medical specialty societies, including The Endocrine Society, have expressed their dissent that the Red Flags Rule should apply to physicians and have succeeded in having implementation of the rule delayed until May 1, 2009. While medical societies continue to argue that physicians are not, in fact, creditors, physicians should take steps to protect their patients and practice. The American Medical Association has developed a number of resources for physicians, including guidance on the Red Flags Rule and simple identity theft prevention programs that can be incorporated into current HIPAA security and privacy policies. To access these resources, please go to: <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/no-index/physician-resources/red-flags-rule.shtml>.

### **Advocate for Endocrinology; ENDO 09 Opens Doors to Congress**

There are a number of issues before Congress that will impact endocrinologists, including health reform, biomedical research funding allocations, and DXA payment reductions, among others. Endocrine Society members have the opportunity to voice their opinions on these issues by visiting their members of Congress during ENDO 09. When considering whether to support specific legislation, constituents' opinions weigh heavily in legislators' decision-making process. For more information on visiting your member of Congress, please contact Stephanie Kutler, Director of Government Affairs, at [skutler@endo-society.org](mailto:skutler@endo-society.org).

### **Senator Specter to Switch to Democratic Party**

Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA) announced on Tuesday, April 28 that he intends to switch his party affiliation to the Democratic Party. In a statement released by the Senator, he stated:

Since my election in 1980, as part of the Reagan Big Tent, the Republican Party has moved far to the right. Last year, more than 200,000 Republicans in Pennsylvania changed their registration to become Democrats. I now find my political philosophy more in line with Democrats than Republicans... I am not making this decision because there are no important and interesting opportunities outside the Senate. I take on this complicated run for re-election because I am deeply concerned about the future of our country and I believe I have a significant contribution to make on many of the key issues of the day, especially medical research. NIH funding has saved or lengthened thousands of lives, including mine, and much more needs to be done.

Specter has been one of the key allies in the Senate for the biomedical research community and was instrumental in the inclusion of more than \$10 billion in funding for the NIH in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Specter's party affiliation change will mean that the Democrats will be one vote away from the 60 vote majority needed to end legislative debate and avoid filibusters. Democrats could gain the 60<sup>th</sup> vote if Al Franken (D-MN) is confirmed.

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