

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 63



Introduced by REP. ANTHONY G. DEL ROSARIO

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to establish the National Stem Cell Research and Storage Center in the Philippines.

Stem cell research has been called the "*new frontier of medicine*" because of its potential to advance the understanding on the biological processes that keep our bodies healthy. Knowledge gained through stem cell research is expected to improve treatment for some of the incurable diseases such as heart disease, cancer, kidney diseases, Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis, lupus, sickle cell disease, HIV/AIDS, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and other degenerative diseases.

Several countries have already ventured into the stem cell treatment which is a type of regeneration medicine that introduces new cells into damaged tissue in order to treat a disease or injury. Through vigorous research on stem cell treatment which was developed from the findings of Canadian scientists Ernest A. McCulloch and James E. Till in the 1960s, thousands of patients around the globe have already benefited from using stem cell delivered safely by skilled and certified physicians.

With the increasing number of Filipinos suffering from terminal and extreme diseases, finding medical breakthrough for their cure should be prioritized. The establishment of a stem cell research and storage center is the first step towards addressing this concern. It restores the hope of Filipino patients who may have lost the chance to live a normal life again.

In view of the foregoing considerations, immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


ANTHONY G. DEL ROSARIO

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 63

Introduced by REP. ANTHONY G. DEL ROSARIO

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING THE STEM CELL CENTER OF THE PHILIPPINES AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* - This Act shall be known and cited as the "*Stem Cell Center of The Philippines Act*".

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - It is the policy of the State to protect and promote the people's right to life and health. For this purpose the State shall intensify human stem cell research on medical interventions that are evidence-based under an effective food and drug regulatory system which will undertake appropriate health manpower for research and development responsive to the country's health needs and problems essential for national development and progress. As such priority will be given to research and development, and invention, innovation and their utilization without prejudice to the human embryo.

SEC. 3. *Scope and Coverage.* - The provisions of this Act shall apply to all public and private projects, programs, laboratories, institutions, experts and practitioners in the areas of medical, pharmaceutical and non-medical stem cell research and stem cell technology application.

SEC. 4. *Definition of Terms.* - For the purpose of this Act, the following terms and phrases shall have the following definitions:

- (a) *Center* shall refer to the Stem Cell Center of the Philippines established pursuant to this Act.
- (b) *Stem Cell Board (SCB)* shall refer to the governing body of the Center constituted in Section 7 hereof.
- (c) *Human Embryo* shall refer to the organism that is derived by fertilization, or any other means from one or more human gametes or human diploid cells.
- (d) *Stem Cells* shall refer to pluripotent cells or unspecialized cells in the human body from which all other tissues "stem" from. They are programmed in vivo or in vitro to potentially become any other kind of cell. As an unspecialized cell, it can self-renew indefinitely and also differentiate into more mature cells with specialized functions and which could be used to repair damaged tissues and replace diseased organs.
- (e) *Human Embryonic Stem Cells* shall refer to cells harvested from the embryo that develop from eggs that have been fertilized in vitro and in vivo.

(f) *Pluripotent Stem Cells* shall refer to specially treated ordinary cells (e.g. skin cells that are specially processed to exhibit some of the properties of embryonic stem cells).

(g) *Fetal Stem Cells* shall refer to cells derived from the fetus.

(h) *Stem Cell Malpractice* shall refer to any personal injury, including death, caused by the negligent or wrongful act or omission of any medical practitioner using the stem cell technology

SEC. 5. *Stem Cell Center of the Philippines* – There is hereby established a Stem Cell Center of the Philippines, hereinafter referred to as the “Center,” based in a public hospital to be identified by the Department of Health (DOH).

SEC. 6. *Powers and Functions*. – The Center shall have the following powers and functions:

(1) Conduct and support basic and applied research to develop techniques for the isolation, derivation, production, testing, and human clinical use of stem cells that may result in improved understanding of/or treatments for diseases and other adverse health conditions.

(2) Prioritize research with the greatest potential for near-term clinical benefit in human patients: *Provided*, That such isolation, derivation, production, testing, or use will not involve the following:

2.1 the creation and the use of a human embryo for research purposes;

2.2 the destruction, manipulation, or discarding of, or risk of injury to, a living human embryo; or

2.3 the use of any stem cell, the derivation or provision of which would be inconsistent with the standards established.

(3) Serve as the core body of a network of all existing stem cell researches in the country.

(4) Receive and manage grants, aids, donations or any kind of assistance both local and/or foreign for achieving its objectives.

(5) Perform such acts as may be necessary for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 7. *Objectives*. – The Center shall have the following objectives:

(a) To establish mechanisms for the dissemination and utilization of stem cell research, prioritizing those with health benefits;

b) To ensure that the conduct of all research and treatment involving human cells are clearly consistent with applicable laws and standards; and

c) To uphold high moral and ethical standards in stem cell research while maintaining the highest respect for human life and dignity.

SEC. 8. *The Stem Cell Board (SCB)*. – The Stem Cell Center shall be organized functionally with the following components:

1. There shall be a Stem Cell Board composed of the Executive Secretary, Secretary of Health, Secretary of the Department of Science and

Technology, practitioners from the private sector and public sector to be appointed by the President of the Philippines: Provided, That there shall only be a maximum of five (5) members.

2. The SCB members shall elect from themselves the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Board.
3. The Board Members shall receive a per diem as may be authorized for every meeting actually attended, in addition to reasonable transportation and representation expenses.
4. The Board shall provide guidance on the thrusts, objectives, policies, research, agenda, programs and other activities of the Center.

SEC. 9. *The Executive Director.* – There shall be an Executive Director who shall have a rank equivalent to an Undersecretary who shall be appointed by the President of the Philippines from a list of recognized scientists in health research development as well as specialist physicians actively involved in health research programs and initiatives as recommended by the Board.

SEC. 10. *Duties of the Executive Director* - The Executive Director shall exercise the following duties and functions:

- a) Over-all supervision and direction on the implementation of all researches and development programs of the Center
- b) Direct the management, operation and administration of the Center;
- c) Execute contracts, incur obligations, acquire and dispose of assets on behalf of the Center;
- d) Prepare the Center's organizational structure, staffing patterns, operating and capital expenditures as approved by the SCB;
- e) Recommend the officers and employees of the Center on the basis of the highest possible standards of merit : Provided, That for technical positions should be equipped with international competitiveness and fit to be public servants subject to civil service laws, rules and regulations;
- f) Implement and enforce policies, decisions, orders, rules and regulations issued by the SCB; and
- g) Exercise such other powers and functions and perform such other duties as may be authorized, delegated, or assigned by the SCB.

SEC. 11. *Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR)* – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Health, in coordination with the Department of Science and Technology shall formulate the Implementing Rules and Regulations of this Act.

SEC. 12. *Annual Report.* – The Executive Director shall submit to the President of the Philippines, through the Secretary of Health, an Annual Report generally dealing with the activities and operations of the Center, together with the audit report on the relevant accounts.

SEC. 13. *Appropriations.* - There is hereby appropriated the amount of Fifty Million Pesos (P 50M) out of any appropriated funds in the National Treasury for such initial requirements as capital outlay of the Center. Thereafter, beginning (date of budget hearings), the Congress of the Philippines shall include as part of its budgetary appropriations the amount of at least Ten Million Pesos (P10M) to finance the recurring and operational expenditures of the Organization.

SEC. 14. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations and other issuances, or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 15. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following its publications in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.