

STEM CELLS: A SUBJECT THAT NEEDS DIVULGATION AND DISCUSSION

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Stem cell research in Brazil is a polemic subject and little argued in universities. Students from biomedical sciences probably have distinct opinions from others. The aim of this study was to verify whether there is difference in student's opinion. A total of 273 students (biomedical sciences: 91, Exact sciences: 90, Human Sciences: 92) were submitted to a multiple choice questionnaire in May 2006. Data was organized in tables and graphics were generated by the Microsoft[®] Excel 2002 software. Most students assumed to have a reasonable knowledge about the subject. Religious barriers and lack of financial support were the main difficulties pointed. Television, newspaper and radio were considered the best source of information. However, about 3% of Exact sciences students attributed low importance to the subject, 4% said there are no difficulties in stem cell research in Brazil, and 1% affirmed there is no need for divulgation. The divergence between groups can be explained by differences in information access and interest. Groups from all areas, except for a little percentage of Exact sciences students, showed a favorable position to the development of stem cell research. However, all groups pointed difficulties and lack of information. Television, newspaper and radio should rigorously control the quality of information transmitted once they are the main sources for all groups.

Key Words: Stem Cells, Public Opinion, Scientific Divulgation