

Senator Harkin,

You will note that my zip code is not within your state, but I write to you on behalf of my brother, Tom Eisen, who has resided in Iowa for many years now but can no longer write for himself. Tom was formerly a news broadcaster in Cedar Rapids where he established a consumer report called "Tom Eisen, The Helping Hand" at Channel 2. His feature segment was recognized by the U.S. Department of Consumer Affairs and he was summoned to the White House to receive an award for excellence in consumer reporting.

Tom also possessed the knack of sniffing out good stories. Years ago, two senators were appointed to the Agricultural Committee, though in their entire lives neither had ever set foot on a farm. Their senatorial counterpart from Iowa (perhaps you?) arranged for them to secretly spend a couple of days living with Iowa farmers to "learn the territory" first hand. Tom got wind of the "secret," tracked down the location and arrived with a camera crew. He interviewed the senators, whom he had filmed shoveling manure and mending fences, and broke the story on the CBS Evening News. It was quite a thrill to see my kid brother introduced by Walter Cronkite!

Just as his career was accelerating, Tom was stricken with Multiple Sclerosis at the age of 27. As his disease progressed, his hands began to tremor and soon he could no longer hold a microphone steady. His speech began to slur. It was clear that his broadcasting days were numbered and it wasn't long before his career came to an abrupt halt. Tom's world changed forever.

Over time, Tom's condition continued to deteriorate. Now 53, his disease affects his cognitive skills, memory and motor skills. He is wheelchair bound and requires full-time care during his waking hours. His MS has created sufficient scar tissue on his brain to cause bouts of dementia. My once articulate, news broadcasting brother can barely speak. For him, finishing a sentence is often a strenuous, frustrating and fatiguing ordeal.

There is, of course, no cure for Tom's Multiple Sclerosis. Our family and friends have prayed for a cure for my brother for 25 years now. From everything we can determine, the greatest promise for a cure for Tom lies in stem cell research.

For me there is no moral dilemma regarding the utilization of frozen clusters of cells in petri dishes, currently awaiting destruction in IVF clinics, toward the goal of ending suffering or saving lives of people living among us. I challenge those who would sentence the ill, the diseased and the injured to a life without hope for a cure. I reject the notion of those who profess that these frozen cells must be "protected" by becoming trash instead of triumph, biohazard material rather than potential medical miracles. Choosing to *not* attempt to save lives using cells slated for discard should never be characterized as "pro-life." In this case it is a verbalized incongruity; misdirection shrouded in a political label.

As politicians debate, the clock continues to tick. Meanwhile, undue legislative tampering delays medical research. Worse yet, the potential discovery of treatments and cures are postponed, perhaps for decades, while millions of Americans continue to suffer and die. Legislators should consider the ethics of that scenario, for therein lies the real question before them.

The President's current stem cell policy is clearly and wholly inadequate. Thus, I write to express my appreciation for your efforts and attempts to bring about a positive change. And I write on behalf of brother. He was once Tom Eisen, the "Helping Hand." He now desperately needs yours and those of your colleagues.

With gratitude and much hope,
Jeff Eisen