

# Maryland Catholic Conference urges funding for adult stem cell research

Two months after the New England Journal of Medicine published the results of a clinical trial that used adult stem-cell research to reverse sickle cell disease in 90 percent of adult patients, the Maryland Catholic Conference is urging state lawmakers to designate money for similar research in Maryland.

The legislative lobbying arm of the state's Catholic bishops is throwing its support behind House of Delegates Bill 271, which would devote 5 percent of the Maryland Stem Cell Research Fund to adult stem-cell research for sickle cell disease. The measure is sponsored by Baltimore County Democrat Shirley Nathan-Pulliam.

Nancy Paltell, MCC associate director for respect for life, noted that even though adult stem-cell research has been known to be effective in treating sickle cell disease, the Maryland Stem Cell Research Fund twice rejected recent applications for funding of Maryland research in the field.

"Adult stem cells don't have the safety issues of embryonic stem cell and induced pluripotent stem cell research - both of which form tumors," said Paltell, expressing concern that the Maryland Stem Cell Research Fund is overwhelmingly favoring projects involving embryonic stem-cell research that results in the destruction of human life.

"Adult stem cells are ready to go," she said, "and adult stem-cell research is getting results. That's where we should be putting our money."

Paltell pointed out that the recent clinical trial cited by the New England Journal of Medicine used adult stem cells from matched bone marrow. Work must now be done to use adult stem cells from either non-matching bone marrow or umbilical cord blood, she said.

"This type of applied research is just the reason the Maryland Stem Cell Research

Fund was established,” she said.

There are nearly 80,000 Americans, mostly African American, who have sickle cell disease.