

a Fortune 500 company in Dallas, Texas. Informed that his position had been dissolved, "and since I was one of the highest paid, 38,000 a year, on their help desk, that I had to be one of the first ones to go. I was given 2 weeks severance pay and found out through my network that the company had outsourced the help desk to an overseas vendor. I am a proud veteran of the U.S. Air Force where I served 8 years and received an honorable discharge. Before being unemployed I had great health insurance and I am in fact a cancer survivor, but after losing my job and not being able to afford the \$340 monthly payment to COBRA to keep my health insurance, I had no other choice but to go to the Dallas VA hospital to register for my health care.

"I am 41 years young and I have now been unemployed for almost 3 years. My father was forced into early retirement because of his heart and my mother just recently lost her job of many years at a local bank. They could barely make it on their mediocre salary and his Social Security. I do not know what they are going to do now and now I have nothing to help them with because I do not have a savings, checking account or 401(K).

"When I was working, I used to send my mother \$250 a month to help her and my father out a little bit, but I cannot do that any more. He has a temporary job at the bank that pays \$13 an hour with no benefits, a lot less than I used to make but I am very happy just to be working again. God bless you."

So these are the real people that I think we need to begin helping.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. There is not a lot more that can be said other than that I think that we need to continue to come to this floor every week and I can commit to you that I will join you and make sure that we can continue to highlight the direction that they are taking this country and the increased debt and the selection of the people who need the least over the people who need the most. And I am not talking about people who are struggling to make ends meet.

You have average working families in America whose priorities include health care and quality education and just making sure that they can stay out of debt. And, instead, the wealthiest few are the priority of the leadership in this Congress.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. The e-mail is 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov. That is 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov. Send us an e-mail. Tell us what you believe to be the main crises facing this country.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Www.pirg.org/consolidation. Student loans, get them consolidated before the interest rate goes up almost 2 percent by the first of next month. And 70 percent of our troops are under the age of 30, which is a younger generation right now fighting in Iraq.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MACK). The Chair would like to remind Members that their remarks in debate should be addressed to the Chair and not to the television audience.

STEM CELL RESEARCH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago on this floor there was a very prolonged and serious debate on stem cells. Now that we have had time for emotions to subside, I thought it might be productive to spend a little while this evening talking about the subject of stem cells and why there is so much interest in it across the country.

A few months ago there was so much interest in this subject in California, for instance, that the voters voted favorably for a resolution that would make \$3 billion from California taxpayers available to do research on embryonic stem cells.

What are stem cells? We have a chart here which kind of shows this.

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There are fundamentally two types of stem cells. There are adult stem cells and there are embryonic stem cells.

I guess the ultimate stem cell is the fertilized ovum, which is referred to here as a zygote, because from that cell develops all the cells of the body. That single cell, produced from the union of the egg and the sperm, divides and divides again and again until finally it is a blastocyst; and then it goes to the gastrula stage, and at that stage the three germ layers begin to sort out the cells that are already differentiating, is the technical term that is used for that.

Every cell in our body, of course, has all of the same gene complement. And by mechanisms that are not clearly understood, during the embryonic process genes get turned on and get turned off, and the cells that are destined to produce your skin, for instance, the genes that are producing all the other tissues of the body are turned off, and only those genes necessary for producing the skin are still active.

Here we have the three germ layers: The ectoderm, which is the outer layer, and from that will develop your skin and your nervous system.

Then we have the mesoderm, that will be the middle layer, meso meaning middle, and from that will develop most of the weight of your body, all of your skeletal muscle, your cardiac muscle, much of the kidney, the blood cells, the smooth muscle in your intestines and stomach and so forth.

Then from the innermost layer of this inner cell mass as it is called here, the mass of cells that differentiates

into these three germ layers, the endoderm, the internal layer, produces not very much of the mass of your body, the pancreatic cell and the thyroid gland and the line of the things like your lung and intestines and so forth are produced from the endoderm.

Then, of course, there are the unique germ cells produced, the sperm in the male and the egg or the ova in the female.

The reason for the intense interest in these stem cells is because of the perceived potential for affecting the course of many diseases and hopefully curing many of our diseases.

We have fundamentally two kinds of problems with our health. One is from tissue deficiencies when the tissue no longer does the kind of thing that it was destined to do and this embryonic development is wearing out or diseased. Then we have diseases from pathogens. These are organisms that can be outside that invade us.

Primarily, the hope is that stem cells will be useful in treating diseases of tissue deficiency. Although if the pathogens have destroyed a tissue and then the body has marshaled its resources with the help of the doctors with the antibiotics and so forth so that the pathogen is destroyed, then there is some hope that through the use of stem cells that you might be able to repair or replace the tissue damaged by the pathogen.

There are a lot of examples of diseases that might be amenable to cure or at least assistance through these stem cells. One is diabetes, which is a deficiency of insulin. Insulin is produced by some little cells that look like islands under the microscope because they are very dissimilar to the cells that they find themselves in. These cells are distributed through the tissue of the pancreas.

The pancreas is a big gland that produces a lot of enzymes. When the food leaves the stomach and goes into the small intestine, the pancreas produces enzymes for the digestion of fats, carbohydrates and proteins. So it is a very important digestive gland.

There is no real reason why these little islands of tissues, called the islets of Langerhans, named for the person who first described them, need to be in the pancreas, but that is where they are. They could, in fact, be any part of your body and do the same thing, which is secreting insulin.

We use insulin to treat persons with diabetes, but everyone knows, particularly the family of those and the patients who have diabetes, that insulin does not cure the disease. It simply prolongs life, but, ultimately, even with insulin, many of the people who have diabetes will end up having peripheral vascular problems with maybe amputation of toes or limbs, usually the lower limb, have problems in the eyes with the peripheral vascular there in the eyes and have vision problems.

Diabetes is the most expensive disease that we have. It costs more to