



Scientific and Medical Accountability Standards
Working Group Briefing Paper:
Revised Payments for Somatic Cells

Background Payments for Somatic Cells

The CIRM MES regulations contain provisions restricting payments to donors of “gametes, embryos, somatic cells or tissue.” – [Section 100080\(a\)\(2\)\(B\)](#). These restrictions apply to modest payments (\$25-50) for donation of blood, skin cells, tissue, urine, or other minimally invasive donations. It is generally accepted practice to provide modest IRB-approved payment to these donors, though many clinical studies ask for volunteers to donate blood, for example, without payment. Many cell and tissue banks contain materials procured by providing such payments. Under the current regulations, these materials are not available for CIRM-funded research that may result in the generation of cells with pluripotent-like characteristics. Grantees have requested that CIRM reconsider this position (see Section 4 of interviews summary).

Cell Payments and the NAS Guidelines

The NAS guidelines discuss limitations on payments for gametes and embryos consistent with CIRM policy, but this requirement is not extended to somatic cells and tissue. The NAS acknowledges existing IRB regulations cover this level of procurement. Therefore, the scope of the NAS policy is more limited than the CIRM regulations.

Policy Considerations

Consider whether nominal payments that are (1) approved by an IRB and (2) consistent with an institution’s standard compensation policy for donors should be acceptable for somatic cells, blood or tissue used in CIRM-funded research. As the NAS recognized, payments for somatic cells do not raise the same ethical concerns about undue influence and “commodification” of reproductive tissue that payments for oocytes and embryos have raised. OHRP has also provided [guidance](#) on the acceptability of payments to research donors.