

March of Dimes
Birth Defects Foundation
National Office
1275 Mamaroneck Avenue
White Plains, New York 10605
Telephone 914 428 7100



September 3, 1997

Dear Mr.

Thank you for your recent letter to the March of Dimes concerning fetal tissue research. I appreciate the opportunity to clarify the March of Dimes policy on this issue.

The mission of the March of Dimes is to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects and infant mortality. We support this goal through community services, advocacy, research and education. The Foundation supports research that seeks to prevent birth defects and assure the birth of healthy babies. In some instances, these vital studies require analysis of live cells of fetal origin.

While some fetal tissue used in research may be available as a result of abortion, there are limitations established by the federal government that safeguard against abuse or incentives for abortion. In addition, medical researchers who receive March of Dimes grants are not permitted to give directive advice on abortion or participate in abortion with the use of March of Dimes funds. Every March of Dimes grantee is notified in writing of this policy and must comply or lose funding.

Currently, less than one percent of all March of Dimes grants involves fetal tissue research. Still, fetal tissue research has contributed to major advances in pre- and postnatal disease prevention and treatment, including the development of the polio vaccine and of surfactant therapy to prevent and treat respiratory distress syndrome, saving lives of countless babies.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide factual information about the March of Dimes and its research policies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Hope C. Ryan".

Hope C. Ryan, MA
Health Information Specialist
Resource Center

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