

Spina Bifida Association's Response to Neural Stem Cells Press Release

September 11, 2008 - Spina Bifida researchers from Children's Hospital Boston, doing research in this most complex disorder, have published the first preliminary evidence of the possibility of introducing neural stem cells into the spinal cord of fetal lambs in association with in utero repair. This study suggests that neural stem cells delivered to the spinal cord in this animal model may function similarly to other nerve cells in a developing fetus. Currently, a prospective multisite research study is underway in the US to more fully evaluate the outcomes of fetal surgery. Results from this study are not yet available.

This exciting research is in its earliest phase but we are hopeful that future research over time will shed light on the many complexities of Spina Bifida and other neural tube defects. However, it should be noted that the current study is preliminary and much work and research needs to be done in the laboratory and in animal models before trials in humans will occur. This work will likely take years.

Spina Bifida is the most common permanently disabling birth defect in the United States. The Spina Bifida Association (SBA) is supportive of research that addresses the prevention of Spina Bifida and improves the lives of those affected by Spina Bifida. Currently, total spending by the National Institutes of Health on research related to Spina Bifida totals about 14 million dollars. SBA believes that much more money needs to go into research related to Spina Bifida to help save lives and improve the quality of life for those living with Spina Bifida.