



Policy Brief

Last Revised: 12/19/2025

7.81 Embryonic Stem Cell and Human Fetal Tissue Research Oversight (ESCRO)

Administering Department: Research Compliance and Regulatory Affairs/Office of Research Integrity and Compliance

Scope:

Summary

The use of Human embryonic stem cells (hESC), Human Induced Pluripotent Stem Cells (hiPSC), non-human embryonic stem cells (nHESC) and Human Fetal Tissue (HFT) in Research support advances in therapies that would be difficult to achieve otherwise. Using these cells creates ethical and regulatory challenges that must be considered when conducting research. This policy aims to inform the Emory research community about the types of research Emory University will permit with these cells and the process of the required oversight by the Embryonic Stem Cell Research Oversight (ESCRO) Committee and the Office of Research Compliance & Regulatory Affairs (RCRA).

Applicability

This policy covers all faculty, staff, students, postdoctoral fellows and trainees, and others at Emory conducting research using hiPSC, hESC, nHESC or HFT at any Emory facility.

Compliance with the Policy

Emory research conducted using hiPSC, hESC, nHESC or HFT requires oversight by the Embryonic Stem Cell Research Oversight (ESCRO) Committee and the Office of Research Compliance and Regulatory Affairs (RCRA). In addition to the ESCRO Committee and RCRA review, research involving these cells in humans and animals will be reviewed by an Institutional Review Board (IRB), Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), and Institutional Biosafety Committee/Research Health and Safety Committee (IBC/RHSC) as applicable. The Principal Investigator is responsible for obtaining required approvals from University Oversight Committees.

Required Approvals and Oversight:

- **ESCRO Committee** - required review and approval for specified embryo and stem-cell related activities (see next section).
- **Institutional Biosafety Committee / Research Health and Safety Committee (IBC/RHSC)** - required for use of hiPSC, hESC, nHESC.
- **Institutional Review Board (IRB)** - required if the work is human clinical research or involves human subjects.



- **Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)** - required for animal research (including chimeric research or transfers into animals).
- **Radiation Safety or other specialized committees** - as applicable.
- **Office of Research Compliance and Regulatory Affairs (RCRA)** - General required contact and approval pathway
- **Office of General Counsel** - review may be required for HFT projects.

Review required by ESCRO Committee:

- Stem cell–based embryo models (non-integrated and integrated).
- In vitro culture of chimeric embryos (human cells into non-human embryos).
- In vitro gametogenesis without fertilization or embryo generation.
- Genetic alteration of embryos or gametes.
- Procurement of embryos or gametes to create embryos for in vitro research.
- Derivation of cell lines from human embryos.
- In vitro culture of human embryos up to 14 days.
- Transferring embryos after mitochondrial replacement techniques into a human uterus.
- Creation of new human embryonic cell lines (requires additional ESCRO approval).

The following types of research using hiPSC, hESC, nHESC, although derived from eligible sources, do NOT meet the eligibility criteria at Emory University, regardless of funding:

- Germline genome editing
- Transferring Mitochondrion DNA (mtDNA)-modified (not including MRT) embryos into a uterus.
- Using gametes differentiated from human stem cells for reproduction.
- Gestating Human stem cell-based embryo models
- Human reproductive cloning
- Breeding human-animal chimeras where there may be human germ cells.
- Transferring human-animal chimeric embryo(s) to a human or ape uterus
- Transferring human embryos(s), irrespective of origins, to an animal uterus

***Please see [full policy](#) for a list of research and other activities exempt from review by the ESCRO committee as well as additional funder-specific requirements.**

Noncompliance with the Policy

Failure to comply with this policy and related compliance obligations could result in loss of funding opportunities, fines, and/or suspension of research activities.