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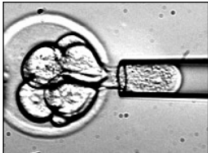
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## Ukraine babies in stem cell probe

By Matthew Hill  
BBC Health Correspondent

**Healthy new-born babies may have been killed in Ukraine to feed a flourishing international trade in stem cells, evidence obtained by the BBC suggests.**

Disturbing video footage of post-mortem examinations on dismembered tiny bodies raises serious questions about what happened to them.



There is heated debate about the ethics of using stem cells

Ukraine has become the self-styled stem cell capital of the world.

There is a trade in stem cells from aborted foetuses, amid unproven claims they can help fight many diseases.

But now there are claims that stem cells are also being harvested from live babies.

### Wall of silence

The BBC has spoken to mothers from the city of Kharkiv who say they gave birth to healthy babies, only to have them taken by maternity staff.

In 2003 the authorities agreed to exhume around 30 bodies of foetuses and full-term babies from a cemetery used by maternity hospital number six.

One campaigner was allowed into the autopsy to gather video evidence. She has given that footage to the BBC and Council of Europe.

In its report, the Council describes a general culture of trafficking of children snatched at birth, and a wall of silence from hospital staff upwards over their fate.

The pictures show organs, including brains, have been stripped - and some bodies dismembered.

A senior British forensic pathologist says he is very concerned to see bodies in pieces - as that is not standard post-mortem practice.

It could possibly be a result of harvesting stem cells from bone marrow.

Hospital number six denies the allegations.

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