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SEOUL, South Korea — The "Pride of Korea" has struck again. Pioneer South Korean stem cell researcher Hwang Wo o-suk (search) and his research colleagues have succeeded in cloning a dog, a global first that extends the remarkable string of laboratory successes by the Seoul National University (search) professor.

Last year, Hwang's team created the world's first cloned human embryos. They followed that in May by creating the first embryonic stem cells that genetically match injured or sick patients.

Now, they've come up with Snuppy, an Afghan hound, now 14 weeks old, that Hwang's research colleague, Gerald Schatten of the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine (search), called "a frisky, healthy, normal, rambunctious puppy."

The goal of Hwang and his team, who reported their achievement Wednesday in the journal Nature, isn't to reproduce lovable pooches but to find ways to eventually help treat human diseases by creating a reliable research model.

Monkeys are the closest model to humans and they are crucial to medical research, but Hwang told reporters Wednesday that cloning a monkey "is technically impossible at the moment."