

Say No to Stem Cells



'Stay clear of stem cell based approach to treat spinal cord injury' - Professor Alan Mackay-Sim

There are no stem cell treatments in the world today that have been fully tested in all stages of clinical trials. Part of the process of clinical trials is to report the outcomes and open them to public scrutiny for others to judge.

Yet 'treatments' using stem cells for persons with SCI are taking place in several countries, including China, Russia, Brazil and India. Such treatments are not based on scientifically proven evidence that stem cells make a difference, partially or wholly, which means risks and benefits remain unproven.

We know illnesses and injuries can change with time and that a few improve without treatment. There is no concrete evidence that it is stem cell treatment that leads to improvement of any sort in a person with SCI.

Clinics offering 'stem cell therapies' do not state what cells they are transplanting, do not provide evidence of how the cells work in animals and whether they work in humans. Statements and testimonials from patients placed on websites or in newspapers are not 'evidence'.

In this backdrop, it is important that every person with SCI adopts a rational approach. I understand several persons with SCI are spending vast sums on stem cell 'treatment' in the hope of improvement. This is a sad state of affairs.

Persons with SCI must not go in for stem cell based 'treatment' in any part of the world, as there is a long way to go to have a scientifically proven approach that also works. Research in this regard is at a very early stage.

The money that is or could be spent on stem cell approach must be used to improve the quality of life in other ways and not wasted in this so-called treatment.



*Professor Alan Mackay-Sim is the Director of National Centre for Adult Stem Cell Research in Australia. He visited the Mary Verghese Institute of Rehabilitation attached to Christian Medical College (CMC), Vellore in early December 2011. He is one of the world's foremost authorities on this subject and the first to try olfactory ensheathing cells on humans with SCI. In an interview published in **The Hindu**, he explained the current state of stem cell research for treating people with spinal cord injury.*

(Source: www.thehindu.com)