

# Trial to Test Stem Cells for Heart Attacks

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I'm surprised they are only getting around to this now. But, thinking back, I believe there were other tests of this technique.

Bill

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Trial to Test Stem Cells for Heart Attacks

By RANDOLPH E. SCHMID, Associated Press Writer Mon Jul 25, 8:21 PM ET

A clinical trial to test the safety of treating heart attack damage with stem cells is about to get under way, following a study that showed the therapy helped in pigs.

Two patients have been enrolled so far at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, and a total of 48 are expected to take part across the country, said Dr. Joshua M. Hare, who is leading the study.

"Anytime something new comes along there is a sense of excitement and that's the feeling that we have. And we obviously hope it will be borne out by the results," Hare said in a telephone interview.

The process uses adult stem cells taken from the bone marrow. These cells, called mesenchymal cells, have been shown to give rise to a variety of cell types. While they don't have the potential to develop into as many cell types as embryonic stem cells, using them avoids the controversy over taking cells from a human embryo.

In tests in pigs, stem cells taken from another pig's bone marrow were injected into the animal's damaged heart. After just two months, the stem cells had helped restore heart function and repaired damaged heart muscle by 50 percent to 75 percent.

Those results are reported in Tuesday's issue of Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

The work is an early indication that stem cells may have therapeutic value in treating heart attacks, but a lot of work remains to be done, said Dr. Sidney

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Smith, cardiology chief at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

It is a long way between successful work in a few pigs and a therapy that could benefit thousands of humans, said Smith, a spokesman for the American Heart Association. In the meantime, he said, efforts such as stopping smoking and controlling cholesterol can help prevent many of those heart attacks.

The planned tests in humans are a Phase I trial, meaning that the goal is merely to make sure the procedure is safe in humans. Only after safety is established will the scientists move on to a Phase II trial to see if it works as well in people as in pigs.

But researchers will be checking to see if the procedure is helping the people. Hare said study participants will be watched for two years. At six months after the treatment they will undergo an MRI scan to check their heart function.

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