



Monday February 2, 2009

New Adult Stem Cell Treatment “Turns the Tide” on MS Symptoms

By Hilary White

CHICAGO, February 2, 2009 (LifeSiteNews.com) – A team of researchers at Northwestern University School of Medicine in Chicago have developed a treatment for multiple sclerosis using stem cells taken from the patient’s own bone marrow. None of the 21 adults who participated in the trials have relapsed in the three years since starting the experiment.

Dr. Richard Burt, the team leader and the hospital’s Division Chief of Immunotherapy, said that randomised clinical trials are still needed – and are already underway – to confirm the findings but, “For the first time ever in the history of treating MS we have reversed disability.”

“All therapies to date ... have focused on slowing the progression of disease,” he said. But with the new treatment, he said, “This is the first time we have turned the tide on this disease.”

A report published in the *Lancet* says that 81 percent of the patients in the trial, 11 women and 10 men, improved by at least one point on a scale of neurological disability. The treatment - autologous non-myeloablative haemopoietic stem-cell transplantation - involved patients who were suffering only the early stages of the disease. Previous attempts to use stem cells to treat MS have been on patients with advanced symptoms.

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is an autoimmune condition in which the immune system attacks the central nervous system, leading to damage to the protective myelin sheath of neurons. The onset of the disease usually occurs in young adults and it is more common in women. It has a prevalence that ranges between 2 and 150 per 100,000. In its early “relapsing-remitting” stages, MS can cause a variety of symptoms, including blurred vision, loss of balance and paralysis, some of which are partly reversible.

The treatment was described by the researchers at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago, as a “re-setting” of the body’s immune system.

Doctors removed stem cells from the patients’ bone marrow, and then used chemicals to destroy all existing immune cells in the body. The stem cells were re-injected and developed into “naïve” immune cells that do not attack myelin.

The key to the treatment is starting early. “If you wait until there’s neuro-degeneration, you’re trying to close the barn door after the horse has already escaped,” said Dr. Burt.

URL: <http://www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/2009/feb/09020202.html>

Copyright © LifeSiteNews.com. This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-No Derivatives License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/3.0/). You may republish this article or portions of it without request provided the content is not altered and it is clearly attributed to "LifeSiteNews.com". Any website publishing of complete or large portions of original LifeSiteNews articles **MUST** additionally include a live link to www.LifeSiteNews.com. The link is not required for excerpts. Republishing of articles on LifeSiteNews.com from other sources as noted is subject to the conditions of those sources.