

# Medical Update Memo

May 25, 2010

## Researchers pave way for the first coordinated international approach to MS stem cell research

### Summary

International consensus on the future of stem cell transplantation research for people with MS was published today, paving the way for more coordinated global research efforts and potentially better, and quicker, patient access to stem cell clinical trials. The guidelines, developed by an international panel of MS experts with input from MS Societies around the world, spell out hope for the future of MS stem cell research and debunk myths about overseas stem cell clinics claiming to cure the condition. **Nature Reviews Neurology** May 6, 2010.

### Details

The consensus is timely, since small-scale trials of stem cells, such as adult mesenchymal stem cells (from bone marrow and other bodily tissues), are already underway or in planning stages for the treatment of multiple sclerosis.

A public information booklet on stem cells, “Stem Cell Therapies in MS,” produced in partnership by MS Societies from the UK, USA, Italy, France and Australia and the MS International Federation, summarizes the current status of stem cell research in MS and frequently asked questions, and is [available to download](#) (.pdf).

Professor Gianvito Martino from the San Raffaele Scientific Institute in Milan, Italy, and Professor Robin Franklin from the University of Cambridge, UK, are lead authors for the landmark guidelines, which:

- outline the promise stem cell transplantation has shown in early stage clinical trials and ways they could be used to treat MS in the future;

- describe the different types of stem cells that might be used to treat different types of MS
- detail methods of delivering these stem cell therapies into patients;
- highlight best practice in conducting clinical trials to evaluate the safety and efficacy of stem cell therapies in MS.

The guidelines are the result of an international stem cell consensus summit held in London in May 2009 which was organized by the MS Society in the UK and USA, and supported by the MS Society of Canada, Italy, France, Australia and the MS International Federation.

Researchers have agreed that stem cells are likely to have a significant role to play in the treatment of MS, but also warn that expectations should be realistic. Professor Gianvito Martino said, “At this stage it is unreasonable to claim that stem cells are a magic cure for MS. It is, however, likely that they will one day play an important role in treating the condition.”

Professor Robin Franklin added, “It is only by working together will we get the answer as to whether stem cell transplants hold promise in the treatment of MS. The guidelines will help the research community get to that answer more quickly than we would by working in isolation.”

With information from the National MS Society (USA)

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