

Increasing number of patients opting for stem cell therapy for treating diverse medical conditions: Experts

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Number of people seeking information on stem cell therapies as an alternate treatment regime to traditionally accepted medical procedures is increasing as days pass by, according to experts on regenerative medicine who attended a media meet in New Delhi on October 5 as part of World Stem Cell Awareness Day.

The experts said that although stem cell research started in India five years ago, majority of the people are still unaware of stem cell therapy and the benefits of stem cell banking.

The meet was organized by Mumbai based organisation, Regenerative Medicine Services (RMS) in association with a Delhi based NGO, FIRST.

The doctors representing stem cell research organisations said regenerative medical research has established the significance of stem cells in transplantation based therapies and their viability as a medical therapeutic option for several blood and immune related disorders. Further, it is applicable for conditions such as cerebral palsy, cancer, Hodgkin's disease and several others.

They said globally stem cells are used to treat over 130 diseases and it is estimated that more than 500 clinical trials are being done to develop therapies using stem cells. Indian companies are becoming an important part of this revolution and help treat patients with diseases ranging from eye problems to heart disorders.

Major players in the Indian stem cell market are cord blood banking and adult stem cell therapy. Adult stem cell therapy includes Autologous Cell Therapy for cartilage regeneration or ACI and Autologous Bone Implantation (ABI). Although there are innumerable other potential uses of stem cells, most of them are in the clinical trial phase showing promising results. The players in the Indian stem cell market have already established themselves as scientifically proven and medically accepted therapies.

While talking on stem cell therapy's role in gynaecology, **Dr Urvashi Seghal, gynaecologist and director of Phoenix Hospital, New Delhi** said despite increased life expectancy due to superior medical technology, India lags behind in the clinical application of such medical advancements and it is time that medical personnel stay up-to-date on the advancements in regenerative medicine. Given its potency and efficacy in the medical field, one can only wonder why the buzz concerning stem cells is seemingly low in a country like India which has the second largest population in the world. Dr Urvashi reasoned that part of this could be attributed to the lack of awareness among both medical and non-medical personnel alike and said efforts must be made to increase consciousness about the future of clinical medicine.

The doctor further added that with over 6 cord blood banks established in India, expectant parents are showing increasing curiosity about cord blood stem cells and their life-saving potential. Parents are now seeking information about the concept and its future uses for the expectant child and family at large.

With increased incidences of osteoarthritis and joint injuries, cell therapies such as ACI and ABI are becoming an increasingly popular treatment choice among both surgeons and patients with minimal invasion, decreased side effects, and high safety and efficacy. Autologous cell therapies are steadily outnumbering traditional treatment, said Dr Raju Vasihya, orthopaedic surgeon, Apollo Hospital, New Delhi.