



Monday, February 26, 2007,  
Chandigarh, India



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### MONDAY SPECIAL

## Man walks, courtesy stem cell therapy

Arup Chanda  
Tribune News Service

Chennai, February 25

A 23-year-old man, who was paralysed from below the waist, is now able to walk after the first successful stem cell therapy in India for spinal cord injuries was conducted at a hospital here.

According to Dr J.S. Rajkumar, chairman, Lifeline Hospitals, the young man, Akbar Ali, suffered serious injuries in his spinal cord when he fell from the fourth floor of a building last October. He was then working at a construction site in Abu Dhabi.

Though he underwent a surgery to stabilise his spinal cord, it was not successful. After he returned to India a month later, he lost sensation in his legs and was paralysed below the waist.

He could not control his urine and bowel movements and was thus admitted to Lifeline Hospitals. The doctors there diagnosed him as a patient for autologous stem cell therapy wherein the stem cells from the patient's body are taken and used at the injured spot.

The technology, which is available at the hospital in collaboration from the Nichi-In Centre for Regenerative Medicine, Japan, was applied to Ali's body. Nearly 100 ml of his bone marrow was removed, harvested and isolated before the stem cells were injected near the injured spot in his spinal cord.

The stem cells emit trophic factors, which enable neurons and vessels to grow; a part of them becomes integral to the region, another component becomes part of the growing nerves.

Two months into the therapy, Ali has now regained 50 per cent sensation below his waist. He can control his urine for up to two hours and can also walk.

Lifeline doctors said this treatment could be used for paraplegics, but usually worked better on younger people with more recent injuries.

The hospital is presently examining the use of this therapy in treating cardiac problems, liver failure, diabetes, multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease.

Of the various sources of stem cells, the autologous stem cell therapy was used by the hospital as there was no risk of rejection nor was there any concern of medical ethics.

Doctors say that preserving stem cells is a kind of bio-insurance for an entire family as the stem cells could help in the treatment of the person's siblings, parents and even grandparents. While preserved cord blood stem cells are a perfect match for the child from whose umbilical cord it was collected, there is only a 25 per cent chance of it being a perfect match for other family members.