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Stem Cells - are we there yet?

Stem Cells. These words have acquired a magical significance within the Parkinson community. For patients and their families, the words raise the hope and expectation for a cure of Parkinson Disease (PD). Such hope and expectation is anchored in medical science. It is grounded on images of high technology in action: scientists looking through high powered microscopes, surgeons in their masks and gowns transplanting an organ, a physician suppressing a patient's tremor by emitting a wireless signal from a hand-held device. Stem Cells. What are they? Cells with the ability to evolve into any cell of the body. We harbor them – sometimes dormant - in our bone marrow and brain. They can also be brought to existence by transforming other cells. How remarkable that we can take a skin cell and make it retrace its steps to the original “mother-cell” – the stem cell - from which it came. We can now think of transplanting new nerve cells (neurons) to the spinal cord of a paralyzed victim of an accident or to the part of a brain that has suffered a stroke. And, in fact, there are

current attempts at doing this to such patients.

So, what has happened in Parkinson disease? Why are there currently no university-run clinical trials for Parkinson disease? There has been no lack of intense effort on the part of the scientific community. They have run into problems, however. For a cell transplant to be successful, you have to be able to produce sufficient amounts. You also have to make sure such cells do not become tumors in the transplanted brain. You also have to be able to ensure that you can adequately measure how the new cells are surviving in the new environment.

Patients with PD are prone to have placebo effect. They may feel improved after any medical procedure, no matter what procedure. This has been scientifically proven. First, let us remember that in PD certain nerve cells that produce a chemical named dopamine have dwindled in numbers. With the fetal transplant, doctors were trying to implant new dopamine producing neurons into the brain. However, some of the patients only

underwent sham surgery, that is, the surgeons opened a hole in the cranium and then closed it. No actual transplant had occurred. A substantial number of these patients felt better for months.

Knowing this, any university-run clinical trials will have to take into account this placebo effect. There will be two possible scenarios. One scenario would start with a trial where all patients would get the experimental treatment with stem cells. Once the investigators conclude that the procedure is safe, a larger trial would be undertaken where some of the patients would get sham surgery. This would allow for clearer conclusion as to effectiveness. Another scenario may have no preliminary safety trial but rather go straight to the comparison with sham surgery and looking at both safety and efficacy from the get-go.

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NATIONAL PARKINSON
FOUNDATION

Stem Cells: Continued

The idea of stem cells is already more than a decade old. Into this long wait period, non-university run centers offering “stem-cell therapies” have cropped up throughout the world. Websites tout success stories. Images of modern facilities send a message of advanced science. Use of scientific words conveys the assurance of technological know-how. These procedures are offered for money. University-run stem-cell trials will not be offered for money. They will be presented as experimental. Funding for such studies will come from the National Institute of Health, from private non-profit foundations or from private biomedical companies. Patients accepted into such experimental trials will have signed informed consents where all conceivable risks would be outlined and were the possibility of getting sham surgery would be spelled out in very clear terms. Moreover, there will be no guarantee of success. Such patients would know that their quest for their own cure is tied to our collective quest of fighting PD. We will be indebted to them, not they to us.

Stem cells. They are a promise and one day they may be a reality. The wait period continues.

Written by: Dr. Carlos Singer, MD



Message from Dr. Singer

We are pleased to announce that we have expanded our clinical center of excellence services into to other areas of our South Florida Community. Our Movement Disorders Specialist now see patients in five different UHealth clinics located in Miami, Kendall, Hialeah, Plantation and Boca Raton, Florida. We look forward to better serving your needs.

New Member to Our Parkinson’s Team: Dr. Corneliu C. Luca, M.D., Ph.D



Dr. Corneliu Luca has recently joined the faculty of University of Miami as Instructor in Neurology. He finished his residency in neurology and fellowship in Movement Disorders at the University of Miami. Dr. Luca also has a PhD degree in molecular biology. Currently he is involved in clinical and translational research in Parkinson’ disease and has a broad interest in neurodegenerative disorders and movement disorders in particular. He is principal investigator in a clinical trial that aims to identify new strategies for gait dysfunction in Parkinson’s Disease. He is the recipient of the Clinical Research Training Fellowship from the American Academy of Neurology and actively involved in clinical research at the Movement Disorders Center at the University of Miami. Dr Luca is a board certified Neurologist and member of the American Academy of Neurology, Movement Disorders Society and Gait and Clinical Movement Analysis Society. Dr. Corneliu

Luca currently accepts new patients with movement disorders such as Parkinson’s disease, essential tremor, cervical dystonia (botulinum toxin injections), chorea, ataxia and gait disorders.

Dr. Luca will be seeing patients at

Our offices in the Professional Art Center,
1150 NW 14 Street, Room 609, Miami, Fl, 33136

For appointments or additional information: (305) 243-3100

**We've
Moved!**

The UM, Parkinson's disease and Movement Disorder Center has moved. Due to restructuring at the University of Miami doctors Carlos Singer, Fatta Nahab, Henry P. Moore and Cenk Sengun's regular clinics have moved to The Professional Arts Center located at 1150 NW 14 Street, Suite 609, Miami, FL, at the University of Miami Medical Campus.
*On the East side of the building there is a Parking Garage.

Dr. Henry P. Moore Seeing Patients in Boca Raton, Miami, and Hialeah Location



Dr. Henry P. Moore will now be seeing patients at our UHealth
Boca Raton location every Monday
Address: 3848 FAU Blvd., Suite 305, Boca Raton, FL 33431
Miami location every Tuesday and Wednesday
Address: Professional Arts Center, 1150 NW 14 St., Suite 609, Miami, FL 33136
Hialeah location every Thursday.
Address: 7000 West 12th Avenue, Suite 4, Hialeah, FL 33014
For appointments or additional information: (305) 243-3100 or (305) 243-6732

Dr. Cenk Sengun Seeing Patients in Boca Raton, Miami and Plantation Location



Dr. Cenk Sengun will now be seeing patients at our UHealth
Boca Raton location every Monday and Thursday
Address: 3848 FAU Blvd., Suite 305, Boca Raton, FL 33431
Miami location every Tuesday
Address: Professional Arts Center, 1150 NW 14 St., Suite 609, Miami, FL 33136
Plantation location every Wednesday.
Address: Plantation Crossroads Business Park,
8100 SW 10th Street, Building 3, Plantation, FL 33324
To request an appointment with Dr. Sengun, Contact: (305) 243-3100 or (305) 243-6732

Dr. Fatta Nahab Seeing Patients in Kendall and Miami Location



Dr. Fatta Nahab will now be seeing patients at our UHealth
Miami location every Monday
Address: Professional Arts Center, 1150 NW 14 St., Suite 609, Miami, FL 33136
Kendall location every other Tuesday
Address: 8932 SW 97 Ave., Miami, FL 33176
For appointments or additional information: (305) 243-3100 or (305) 243-6732

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Please remember that the material presented in this newsletter is for informational purposes only. It should not be used for treatment purposes. Consult with your physician for further information and discussion, if needed.

The Parkinson Insider is published three times a year for patients and their caregivers with Parkinson's disease and other movement disorders.

**PD
Event**

Parkinson's Disease 101 (In English)

Tuesday October, 23 and 30, 2012

(This event is a two day educational series)

Time: 10:00AM—12:30PM

Presenters Angela Russell, ARNP, Ph.D & George Dumenigo, LCSW, Licensed Clinical Social Worker

Location: The Palace Suites, 11377 SW 84th Street, Miami, FL 33173

The National Parkinson's Foundation Moving Day

The National Parkinson Foundation's Moving Day® is a Miami and Boca Raton, Florida annual fundraising Walk event. It will be a day of joining together and raising awareness of Parkinson's disease. In addition to a fundraising walk, it will be a celebration of movement, with a special Movement Pavilion featuring yoga, dance and much more. We anticipate more than 1,000 participants, which will include people with Parkinson's, families, friends, healthcare professionals, corporate leaders and corporate teams to join together to raise funds in support of the Foundation's mission. It will be a day to move, a day that will move you and a day to move others.



Miami, FL— Bayfront Park

We encourage you to join our **UM Team**

Schedule Details

8:30 a.m. - Registration Opens

10:00 a.m. - Walk Begins

When: Sunday, October 7, 2012, 8:30 AM to 1:00 PM

Contact Team UM Captain: George Dumenigo

Phone: (305) 243-1865

Join Team UM: <http://www3.parkinson.org/goto/UMTeam>

Contact Email: gdumenigo@med.miami.edu

www.NPFSouthFlorida.org

Boca Raton, FL—FAU Stadium

Schedule Details

7:00 a.m. - Set Up

8:00 a.m. - Registration Opens

9:45 a.m. - Warm Up

10:00 a.m. - Walk Begins

When: Sunday, October 21, 2012, 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM

Contact Name: Stuart Perlin

Contact Phone: (561) 306-2090

Contact Email: movingday@npfsouthpalmbeach.org

We are grateful to the NPF for their support of the Parkinson Insider.