**Forvitnilegt,**

**það vantar ekki að hún Patricia Beals er hróðug.**

**Egilsstaðir, 01.05.2015 Jónas Gunnlaugsson**

Ef ég má ekki birta þetta þá tek ég það strax niður, að sjálfsögðu.

Stem Cells: Alternative to Knee Replacement?

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ABC News, Stem Cells: Alternative to Knee Replacement?

**By LIZ NEPORENT, ABC Medical Unit**

Last year, Patricia Beals was told she’d need a double knee replacement to repair her severely arthritic knees or she’d probably spend the rest of her life in a wheelchair.

**Hoping to avoid surgery, Beals, 72, opted instead for an experimental treatment that involved harvesting bone marrow stem cells from her hip, concentrating the cells in a centrifuge and injecting them back into her damaged joints.**

**“Almost from the moment I got up from the table, I was able to throw away my cane,” Beals says. “Now I’m biking and hiking like a 30-year-old.”**

A handful of doctors around the country are administering treatments like the one Beals received to stop or even reverse the ravages of osteoarthritis. Stem cells are the only cells in the body able to morph into other types of specialized cells. When the patient’s own stem cells are injected into a damaged joint, they appear to transform into chondrocytes, the cells that go on to produce fresh cartilage. They also seem to amplify the body’s own natural repair efforts by accelerating healing, reducing inflammation, and preventing scarring and loss of function.

Christopher J. Centeno, M.D., the rehab medicine specialist who performed Beals’ procedure, says the results he sees from stem cell therapy are remarkable. Of the more-than-200 patients his Bloomfield, Colo., clinic treated over a two-year period, he says, “two thirds of them reported greater than 50 percent relief and about 40 percent reported more than 75 percent relief one to two years afterward.”

According to Centeno, knees respond better to the treatment than hips. Only eight percent of his knee patients opted for a total knee replacement two years after receiving a stem cell injection. The complete results from his clinical observations will be published in a major orthopedic journal later this year.

**The Pros and Cons**
The biggest advantage stem cell injections seem to offer over more invasive arthritis remedies is a quicker, easier recovery. The procedure is done on an outpatient basis and the majority of patients are up and moving within 24 hours. Most wear a brace for several weeks but still can get around. Many are even able to do some gentle stationary cycling by the end of the first week.

There are also fewer complications. A friend who had knee replacement surgery the same day Beals had her treatment developed life-threatening blood clots and couldn’t walk for weeks afterwards. Six months out, she still hasn’t made a full recovery.

Most surgeries don’t go so awry, but still: Beals just returned from a week-long cycling trip where she covered 20 to 40 miles per day without so much as a tweak of pain.

As for risks, Centeno maintains they are virtually nonexistent.

“Because the stem cells come from your own body, there’s little chance of infection or rejection,” he says. Not all medical experts are quite so enthusiastic, however. Dr. Tom Einhorn, chairman of the department of orthopedic surgery at Boston University, conducts research with stem cells but does not use them to treat arthritic patients. He thinks the idea is interesting but the science is not there yet.

“We need to have animal studies and analyze what’s really happening under the microscope. Then, and only then, can you start doing this with patients,” he says.

The few studies completed to date have examined how stem cells heal traumatic injuries rather than degenerative conditions such as arthritis. Results have been promising but, as Einhorn points out, the required repair mechanisms in each circumstance are very different.

Another downside is cost: The injections aren’t approved by the FDA, which means they aren’t covered by insurance. At $4,000 a pop — all out of pocket — they certainly aren’t cheap, and many patients require more than one shot.

Ironically, one thing driving up the price is FDA involvement. Two years ago, the agency stepped in and stopped physicians from intensifying stem cells in the lab for several days before putting them back into the patient. This means all procedures must be done on the same day, no stem cells may be preserved and many of the more expensive aspects of the treatment must be repeated each time.

Centeno says same day treatments often aren’t as effective, either.

**But despite the sky-high price tag and lack of evidence, patients like Beals believe the treatment is nothing short of a miracle. She advises anyone who is a candidate for joint replacement to consider stem cells first.**

**“Open your mind up and step into it,” she says. “Do it. It’s so effective. It’s the future and it works.”**

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[Source: http://abcnews.go.com](http://abcnews.go.com/Health/GMAHealth/stem-cell-treatment-ease-osteoarthritis-pain-offer-alternative/story?id=13550160#.TybF4yPwOMs)