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Pak won by 168 runs
Ind(2nd Ing)
214/10 (90.0 Ovs)
Kumble* 37(52)

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WONDER CELL

CUTTING EDGE MEDICINE

City hospitals to tap stem cell potential

Bangalore is on the verge of a stem cell therapy boom, Shuba Narayanan reports for Deccan Herald.

Following the initial success at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, where 40 heart patients were treated using bone marrow stem cells, the world's biggest medical fantasy is steadily catching the fancy of the City's leading hospitals.

While Manipal hospital is all set to dedicate an entire floor for housing a permanent stem cell research facility, Narayana Hrudayalaya intends to do an AIIMS act in Bangalore within three months — use bone marrow stem cells to cure coronary disease. St John's Medical College is shortly going to open its bone marrow facility and "will look into stem cell research once this facility is established".

New facility

Meanwhile, Sagar Apollo Hospital and MS Ramaiah Memorial Hospital are considering introducing research in molecular biology. They hope to open similar research centres within a year.

Manipal Hospital has invested Rs 15 crore into Manipal Acunova, the research facility that will be inaugurated in April. According to Dr Satish Totay who is heading its research team, research conducted in the last six months is already yielding results.

The hospital claims that it is ready to use stem cells for curing blindness.

"We are working on culturing cornea and neuro related stem cells, and we are ready to conduct cornea transplants using stem cells," he says.

The research unit has already procured four embryonic stem cell lines and is working on creating more lines. According to Dr Totay, the advantage that Indians have over their Caucasian and Chinese counterparts is that the population is not genetically diverse.

"While only one out of 25,000 people match the donor's stem cells in other populations, in India it is one per 8,000," explains Dr Totay, quoting research. "This means that it is easier to find a match in India and we require fewer lines."

Embryonic stem cell research has kicked up a controversy and those opposed to it allege that taking embryonic stem cells, which are considered basic life cells, is equivalent to taking a life.

ICMR white paper

However, Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) has released a white paper allowing embryonic stem cell research, provided the embryos are generated using In Vitro Fertilisation techniques. Some experts, like Dr S G Rao contend that the argument is premature.

"It will take at least another ten years before it is ready for clinical application on humans," Dr Rao says.

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