

Stem Cell Therapy - Part III

by Diane Lees

After many months that have included aquatic physical therapy, daily supplements, and a lot of anticipation, the week of "the real thing" - the full stem cell procedure - took place beginning Thursday, July 16th.

The goal is, of course, to have a return to a more normal state with my right knee - full range of motion, much less pain, and back to a more active lifestyle that will include bicycling longer miles with more climbing ability, a full yoga practice, and a real desire to get back to some running.

I had the first of three parts of the stem cell procedure that I have chosen to remedy the issues with my right knee on Thursday, July 16th



marking for saline/dextrose

actual injection

the space into which the injections were made

Phase I was an injection of a mixture of dextrose and saline to prepare the knee (tilling the soil was the analogy) for the stem cells. The procedure is relatively simple, quick, and with a bit of "numbing", relatively painless. We were on our way in less than an hour!

Then I went home for the weekend returning on Tuesday, July 21st for Phase II - planting the seeds As Dr. Kruse (and his unbelievably fabulous staff) refer to it.

My sister and I arrived in Toledo early in the morning. The first item of business was the extracting of 14 vials of blood from my arm. A portion of this blood would be mixed with the harvested stem cells for reinjection the same day; the rest would be frozen until Thursday.

I was then taken to the special room they have for the stem cell harvesting. It's very high-tech looking and, to someone who might be intimidated by a lot of medical technology (which I am not), it might be terrifying! I found it fascinating; though lying on my stomach with my face down I didn't see much!

Now, this is going to sound WAY worse than it was; but, the technique is actually very impressive and does the job without a lot of discomfort. (In fact, it was my worst nightmare until it was done!)

My hips were "numbed" and a small drill was used so that the harvesting needle went directly where it needed to go - deep into the marrow. The actual discomfort part was the "pulling" that I could feel as they extracted the stem cells from the marrow. It was over in less than 20 minutes. And, my hips haven't been sore at all!

I found out that one of the most important ingredients of this process is the actual stem cell count. The desired number is above 400,000,000; my count was 550,000,000. According to Bonnie, who really runs the place when it comes to the Regenxx procedures, the Advanced Stem Cell Support Formula supplement I was and am still taking has made a huge difference in obtaining successful stem cell counts.

My sister and I then went to breakfast as well as picked up a prescription that was given to me for pain (for the rest of the week).

When we returned, the now harvested stem cells mixed with the blood taken earlier in the day had been processed and was about to be inserted into my right knee. This was the "planting of the seeds". The procedure was almost identical to the first injections of saline/dextrose except the cells were only directed into two specific places as opposed to many spots in three areas of my knee.

I watched the ultrasound monitor as a portion of the stem cell mixture was carefully directed into the (almost non-existent) space between the tibia and the knee joint - what doctors often refer to as bone-on-bone. The remainder of the stem cell mixture was directed over the kneecap and "flooded" the rest of the knee. I was able to actually watch the entire process on the ultrasound monitor.

I was told to immediately start wearing the rebounder brace that I had had fitted earlier in the month. I am to use it while I'm up and about for the next 6-8 weeks. The brace supports the knee and helps keep the spaces open for the stem cells to grow.

For the final procedure on Thursday morning, we returned to Toledo and another 12 vials of blood were drawn. They were then mixed with the remainder of the frozen blood and spun into a "platelet rich plasma" (which, by the way is a sort of yellow - NOT red) and injected into the knee to "nourish" or "fertilize" the stem cells.



(Ultrasound of PRP procedure in action)

I came home and have been resting. Today, the day after the final procedure, I am taking the pain medication as needed and walking as little as possible.

The instructions I was given are clear and easy to follow. Lay low for days 1-3, walk normally 30-60 minutes a day for days 4 through the second week. Weeks 3-6 walk as much as I like and bike and/or swim. After week 6, begin integrating all desired activities back into my schedule.

As a yoga instructor, I am planning to add yoga back after day 4 on a limited basis.

My next appointment is at the end of August for a check up. Until then, thanks for reading.