

# Treating MS Symptoms With Stem Cells

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An estimated 400,000 Americans suffer from multiple sclerosis, but the findings of a new clinical trial shows promise in the fight to reverse symptoms of MS.

Researchers at Northwestern University conducted a trial using patients' own stem cells to treat symptoms of multiple sclerosis, reports *Early Show* correspondent Debbye Turner Bell, and although the study group was small -- only 21 patients participated in it -- the findings are a huge breakthrough in the fight against MS.

Edwin McClure is strong and healthy now, but just four years ago, his life was very different.

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thought was a cold. Then his vision changed.

"It was kind of like somebody turned down a dimmer switch 30 degrees," McClure said.

It was a neurologist who diagnosed what was happening to Edwin.

"He said, 'You have the signs of multiple sclerosis,'" McClure said.

"And what did you think?" Turner Bell asked.

"I remember hearing my mom say, 'Oh no.'" McClure said. "This is a disease 40-year-old white women get and I'm like 'I'm an 18-year-old black male. Somebody didn't get the memo somewhere.'"

For the next two years, Edwin received the conventional drugs used to manage MS, but his symptoms persisted. Then in 2005, he heard about a clinical trial being conducted at Northwestern University in Chicago.

"This therapy is designed to reset your immune system," said Dr. Richard Burt.

Burt led a study that looked at a completely new way to treat MS -- stem cell transplant. The patient's own stem cells are stimulated to grow more cells, then

harvested. Next, chemotherapy is used to wipe out the immune system.

"It was rough," McClure said.

The treatment lasted nearly a month. Then Edwin's previously harvested stem cells were transplanted back.

"They call it your birthday when you get re-infused," McClure said. "So that birthday was January 21, 2006."

"When did you start thinking, 'This might have worked,'" asked Turner Bell.

"When my hair started growing back," McClure said.

"Well now for the first time in battling MS, I think you can say there's a study that's shown we've turned the tide against the disease," Burt said.

And today, Edwin's symptoms of MS have completely disappeared.

"I really don't feel like I have multiple sclerosis anymore," he said.

Edwin McClure and his mother, Bernice, visited *The Early Show* to share more of his story. **Click on the Play button** below to see the interview.