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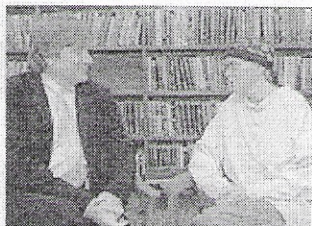
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Using Stem Cells To Fight Autoimmune Diseases

For the past several years, physicians at Northwestern Memorial have led the way in researching the use of stem cell transplants for the treatment of autoimmune diseases, including lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, Crohn's disease and multiple sclerosis (MS).



Dr. Burt consults with his patient Kathy Duffey.

"Basically, the idea is to harvest some of the patients' own stem cells from their blood, deliberately destroy the immune system with chemotherapy and then re-implant the stem cells and hope they will multiply into a healthy immune system," explains [Richard Burt, MD](#), a specialist in autoimmune diseases.

Last year, Dr. Burt performed the world's first adult stem cell transplant to treat Crohn's disease, a disease in which white blood cells attack the immune system. Dr. Burt and his third patient to have a transplant for Crohn's disease, Kathy Duffey, were recently featured on Chicago's WGN-TV News.

Kathy is one of an estimated 1 million Americans with inflammatory bowel disease (Crohn's and colitis). While Crohn's disease afflicts people of all ages, it is primarily a disease of the young. Kathy, a 38-year-old nurse, was diagnosed her freshman year in college.

"After living for 20 years with and against Crohn's disease, I've come to a point where all medications have failed. Literally, nothing helps," Kathy told WGN. But after being sick from her teen years, Kathy hopes now that she's had the transplant, she will be pain free within a few months. "It'll be amazing. It's gonna be amazing," she says.

The Chicago Tribune recently featured Dr. Burt's work with an article on stem cell transplants for MS patients. The Tribune article tells the story of Justin Sears, who three years ago was a carefree college student whose hands mysteriously started to shake when he tried to use his computer keyboard. Next, he began having trouble with his balance and before long, he couldn't even climb stairs.

A stem cell transplant performed at Northwestern Memorial Hospital last year seems to have put his MS on hold. "I can write with a pen again," Justin told the Tribune. "The hand tremors are much better. I can butter my own bread and eat soup, which I couldn't do before. I can climb stairs again. Before, I couldn't walk a hundred feet. Now, I can walk for miles."

"Preventing people with MS from becoming disabled - that's the goal," Dr. Burt told the Tribune. "No other therapy has done that. But it's still too early to say if stem cell transplants can prevent disability."

For more information about this research or for referral to a participating physician, please call 1.877.926.4664.

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