E-news

Nebraska Coalition for Lifesaving Cures

The Newsletter of the Nebraska Coalition for Lifesaving Cures
August, 2012

Cutting-edge clinical trial offers hope to those with ALS

A clinical trial overseen by the University of Michigan may provide hope. It's tentative and early. But when the rest of a person's life has been compressed to an expectancy of two to five years, it is hope, nonetheless.

The trial has been based in Atlanta since 2010, but Michigan has requested approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to expand it and move it to Ann Arbor. It is cutting-edge and audacious work — the only ALS trial so far in which neural stem cells are injected directly into a patient's spinal cord. So far, 15 patients have undergone the procedure — two of them twice — as the FDA monitors its safety.

Regis Kleiss, 28, of Royal Oak, Mich., is taking part in a clinical trial to combat amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, led by the University of Michigan.

By Kimberly P. Mitchell, Detroit Free Press

Full Story in *USA Today* (08-04-2012)

UNMC announces Richard Holland Future Scientist Award winners

Six undergraduate students from four Nebraska colleges and universities recently received the 2012 Richard Holland Future Scientist Award from the Nebraska Coalition for Lifesaving Cures. The students received cash prizes totaling $2,700 at the annual INBRE (Institutional Development Award (IDeA) Networks of Biomedical Research Excellence Program) conference on Aug. 8 in Grand Island. The awards are named in honor of Richard Holland, an Omaha philanthropist and longtime supporter of research.

Full Story in *UNMC News* (08-23-2012)

L-R: Andrew Cannon (NWU); Rachel Coburn (UNL), Kate Weskamp (NWU), Lana Zholudeva (CU A&S), Sean West (UNO-IS&T) (not pictured: Kristina Ward (CU A&S))

Ruling frees FDA to crack down on stem cell clinics

It's official: stem cells are drugs. At least, that's the opinion of the US district court in Washington DC, which has ruled that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has the authority to regulate clinics offering controversial stem cell therapies. Treatments in which stem cells are harvested from bone marrow and injected straight back into the same patient are deemed part of routine medical practice - not regulated by the US government. But if the cells are subjected to more than "minimal manipulation", the FDA maintains that the therapy becomes a "drug", which must be specifically approved for use.

Full Story in *New Scientist* (07-25-2012)

Stem cell findings point toward new cancer treatments

When cancers are treated, tumors may shrink but then come roaring back. Now studies on three different types of tumors suggest a key reason why: The cancers are fueled by stem cells that chemotherapy drugs don't kill. The findings — made by independent research teams that used mice to study tumors of the brain, intestines and skin — could change the approach to fighting cancers in humans, experts said.

Full Story in the *Los Angeles Times* (08-01-2012)

Stem Cells in Ophthalmology Update 22: A Stargardt's Clinical Trial Patient's Story, In Her Own Words

Back a few months ago, I got an inquiry about my tables of clinical trials published in my online Journal. I responded to the woman inquirer and found out that she was considering participating in a clinical trial. The inquirer was Maurie Hill. She has Stargardt's disease. When Maurie told me that she had been accepted into the clinical trial, I suggested that she keep notes and write about her experiences. She thought that would be a good idea and here, in her own words, is the first entry in her diary.

Full Story in *Irv Arons' Journal* (08-02-2012)

Stem cell injections after a heart attack restore the heart to a healthy state

Until recently, when a patient suffering a heart attack arrived at a hospital, doctors could open the blocked blood vessel and restore blood flow to prevent further damage. But there was nothing they could do to reverse the harm already done. That damage -- scarring that can kill up to 50 percent of the heart -- leaves patients with difficulty breathing, loss of energy and the inability to do things such as walk up stairs. Some patients need transplants. And some end up with hearts so weak they die.

Full Story in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* (08-19-2012)

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