

## **MultiStem: A Promising New Stem Cell Therapy Still Under Investigation**

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Every new promising approach to treating **spinal cord injuries** (SCIs) is critical to the United States since close to 1,200,000 Americans are currently battling some form of this disability. Furthermore, another 12,000 to 20,000 new cases are diagnosed each year.

According to the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation, the majority of these patients are between the ages of 15 and 35. Current estimates indicate that each of these patients face lifetime medical costs ranging between \$500,000 and \$3,000,000. The exact figure depends upon the complications involved with each case.

### **What Actually is MultiStem Therapy?**

Researchers at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine and scientists at Athersys, Inc., had a joint study published in the January 17, 2011 issue of the *Journal of Neuroscience* regarding a stem cell therapy called MultiStem®. **The study** showed that when Multipotent Adult Progenitor Cells (MAPC) were administered to rodent models immediately following spinal cord injury, it was possible to “prevent the retraction of neurons, a process referred to as ‘axonal dieback,’ reduce inflammation in the region of injury . . . [and also promote] the regrowth of neurons.”

Stated differently, the study was the first to demonstrate that an adult stem cell has the capacity to modify what’s known as “**the wound response**” following an SCI. When inflammation in the wound area can be positively altered, there are fewer chances of additional central nervous system **injuries** and there is an increased chance that damaged

neurons can regenerate themselves. The properties of the administered Multipotent Adult Progenitor Cells (MAPC) were also impressive since they helped bolster the important work of immune cells following an SCI. (Other possible therapeutic benefits of this study are set forth in the *Journal of Neuroscience* article referenced above.) Although the CEO of Athersys has acknowledged that much more research is still necessary before this study's methods can be applied to human therapy, there's a strong chance that future research may likely benefit those suffering from a wide range of neurological ailments.

## Other Important Stem Cell Information and Resources

The National Institutes of Health maintains an excellent Web site simply entitled, "**Stem Cell Information**" that provides a wealth of resources for those wanting to learn more about the basics of stem cell research. It's also useful to those seeking more detailed information about such topics as the ethical issues surrounding stem cell research, the **current United States policies** governing research and the funding for these projects.

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