

Brazil Uses Stem Cells to Treat Chagas' Patients

Contributed by Marília Santos
Tuesday, 05 April 2005

In Brazil, stem cells are being used to treat Chagas' disease in its chronic stage. Scientists discovered that stem cells extracted from the patient's own bone marrow act to regenerate damaged heart tissue.

Ricardo Ribeiro, a cardiologist at Santa Izabel Hospital, in Salvador, capital of the Northeastern state of Bahia, affirms that the research involving stem cells is helping patients in the terminal stages of the disease.

"Thirty patients received bone marrow stem cell transplants and experienced significant improvement in their lives."

According to the cardiologist, 70% of Chagas' disease patients coexist with the protozoan, *Trypanosoma cruzi*, which causes the disease.

"Only 30% of the victims develop the disease in a chronic form. The research is aimed at reaching these cases," Ribeiro affirms.

He says that the treatment used in Bahia will be transferred to other Brazilian capitals, such as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, Curitiba, and Porto Alegre.

The cardiologist also explains that stem cell transplants are of no help in treating people who suffer from the disease in its acute form.

Translation: David Silberstein

Agência Brasil