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'Asia to dominate adult stem cell commercialization'

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-Don Margolis, Chairman & Founder, The Repair Stem Cell Institute, US

How do you see the market for the commercialization of stem cells in the Asia Pacific region?

There are significant factors that favor the Asia Pacific region over the West for the commercialization of stem cells. Western countries, particularly the US, have not only wasted billions of dollars but have squandered far too much time trying to prove that embryonic stem cells (ESC) can someday be safely implanted into humans. Science has taken a backseat as the issue has become embroiled in political and religious debates that have obscured the real issues. Tragically, adult stem cell (ASC) triumphs have been denied or covered-up in efforts to get the taxpayer to support embryonic stem cell research. Singapore learned the hard way that ESC simply don't work, but that truth has been kept away from the West.

Led by China, India, and more recently Singapore, ESC research has been accepted for what it is-embryonic stem cells do not work when implanted into animals. APAC, wisely, focuses its research efforts on what does work.

There are in excess of 100 diseases considered "untreatable" by Western medicine, which have been proven treatable with adult stem cells administered by APAC doctors. These treatments are not necessarily cures but over thousands of cases have improved the quality of life of the average patient using the implantation of either autologous ASCs (taken from the patient's own body) or by ASCs derived from cord blood. Just recently in America, a well-backed politically powerful group, using the excuse of overseas stem cell frauds, has started a strong effort to shove ASC into the trap of FDA drug company rules, which will surely destroy economically this infant science in North America and possibly Europe too. For these reasons, APAC has a chance to dominate ASC commercialization for decades to come.

What are your views on the current status of the commercialization of stem cell research being conducted at various labs around the globe?

Research in the West is forced to go down the path of drug regulation, which means it will be 10 years, if they are lucky, before the ASC successes can be commercialized. The leading American ASC company, Osiris, despite over five years of research within that restrictive structure, has not even applied for one ASC-implanting clinical trial! Forced to operate by investors and regulators as a "drug company," they are striving for "products", not for ASC implants. One American ASC heart company, Bioheart, is struggling to raise the funds for its well-proven therapy for common heart diseases, because they are forced to try to imitate what drug companies do to "come to market", that is spend $2 billion. Can it be done with a mere $50-100 million? Probably not, but they are trying. By comparison, TheraVitae went to the market with only $4 million in APAC and has successfully treated well over 300 heart patients to date-only because they chose APAC and not the West.

In the entire "developed" world there is only one ASC treatment center, which has been subject to strict regulation and approved by the government.

Therapies for diseases considered "incurable" and "untreatable" are not considered possible by the average doctor in the West, because they have been intentionally deprived of scientific information. Hard to believe? Consider this: Recently, three new scientific victories for ASC researchers have been announced, but the publications are not allowed to use the term "adult stem cells" in the articles. They must refer to them only as "stem cells," so that the public will think, as a majority has been trained to do, that it is embryonic stem cells that were being used.

The bottom line is that there are few profits in stem cell research. The West may put them under a $2 billion, 15-year drug approval system, something that no stem cell company can possibly survive. Latin America was one of the first back in 2002, but they have neither the funds nor the drive of APAC. Europe also was a pioneer in 2001, but is now stuck in the embryonic and regulatory traps. Therefore, APAC will increase its stem cell commercialization lead every year into the foreseeable future.