

# The Mexican Stem Cell Adventure

## Part 2: Treatment

By: Robert Genetski

After committing to go ahead with the procedure, my wife and I arrived in Los Cabo on Sunday, January 14, 2018. We stayed in San Jose del Cabo, about a half mile from Dr. Victor's clinic.

The following morning I arrived at the clinic to take blood tests. These were to detect whether I had any serious diseases—HIV, cancer markers, hepatitis a and b, and Brucellosis (a bacterial infection). The doctor had already explained to me how stem cells worked wonders in regenerating damaged cells. However, they also had the potential to enhance any disease that might be present.

After the nurse took four vials of my blood for testing, the doctor asked me if I wanted to have a stem cell implant injected into my belly right now. I asked if we shouldn't wait for the results from the blood tests. He assured that the initial implant of cells would not be enough either to repair my knees or to promote the growth of any disease. The implant would simply help get my body ready for the actual treatment. Since my knees were getting progressively worse each day, I desperately wanted to start the process as soon as possible.

The implant of stem cells involved an injection on either side of my belly button. The first was mildly uncomfortable, particularly as the fluid entered. The second was very uncomfortable. I was relieved when it was over. Both areas where he injected were very sore. He said the blood test results would be available within 24 to 48 hours, at which time we could schedule the knee therapy.

Tuesday morning I felt worse than ever. My entire body ached. My knees felt weaker and more painful than ever. It hurt to walk. The areas where he injected the implant were very sore. I felt awful. My wife asked if it might be due to the implant. I didn't know what it was. Fortunately, I felt better as the day went by.

Wednesday morning, after a good night's sleep, I woke up feeling refreshed. Then an email from Barry Russell arrived. Barry is the person working with the doctor and a principal in PRMedica, the company that provides the stem cells. Barry's email said the doctor wanted to talk to me about my blood tests. I planned to see him at 10 am that morning.

At 75 years of age, except for sore knees, I felt as healthy as anyone could imagine. Even so, I was anxious over the test results. Not only would failing the blood tests end my stem cell adventure, it would mean I had more serious problems than bad knees.

To my relief, my blood tests were fine. The doctor asked how I felt. I said today was fine, but yesterday I felt terrible. He told me this was good. Everyone reacts differently to the initial implant of stem cells. Some feel great the next day. In my case, my immune system reacted as if the body had been invaded by a foreign agent. By the end of the day, my immune system realized the cells weren't harmful and stopped reacting. He told me it meant my body would be better prepared to accept the next, more powerful injections of stem cells into my knees.

I made arrangements with Barry Russell, the principal at PRMedica, to pay for the stem cell procedure. Barry needed the funds wired to his US bank account by noon on Thursday so he could order delivery of the stem cells. The cells must be used within 24 hours of leaving the laboratory.

On Thursday my knees were as bad as ever. I walked about 200 yards before both knees became very painful. I couldn't wait for the treatment.

I arrived at the clinic at 3 pm on Friday. Dr. Victor took me into a room where a nurse took my blood. The amount was somewhat less than they take when you donate blood. Another nurse began taking ultra-sound images of each knee. Dr. Victor examined the images thoroughly, discussing what he saw with the nurse. After about half an hour, he said the mixture of stem cells and blood was ready.

We went to another room where he explained how he would not need the use of the ultra-sound during the injections as he had previously thought. Instead, the ultra sound images had indicated he had plenty of room in the knee for directing the injections. The ultra sound also revealed the ligament inside my left knee was greatly inflamed. He decided the best way to deal with the problem was to do two injections into each knee, one into the cartilage and the other directly into the ligaments.

Although the needle was quite long, the two injections into my right knee (the better of the two knees) were relatively painless. These included about 20 million stem cells. The left knee was different. Due to the extent of its damage, he determined it would need 55 million stem cells. He decided to shift more cells to the bad knee than he had first intended.

The first injection into the cartilage of the left knee was a bit painful, but not too severe. The injection directly into the ligament on the inside of the left knee was very painful. He said he had to use the needle first to release the inflammation in the ligament and then inject the mixture containing stem cells into the ligament. The whole procedure took no more than a few minutes. This included time for telling me about patients who freaked out when seeing the size of the needle as well as asking me if I wanted the nurse to hold my hand. I declined.

The side of my left knee swelled up as the inflammation shifted from my ligament to another part of the knee. He told me the swelling would gradually go down as the inflammation was absorbed into my body. I was told to use the knees by walking so they wouldn't become stiff. He also gave me his cell and email information and told me not to hesitate to call at any time if there was any unusual swelling, redness or other issue.

I asked how soon it would be before I should expect an improvement. He told me, as with the initial implant, everyone reacts differently. The average time would be two weeks. After leaving the doctor's office I walked along the beach for about a quarter mile without any serious pain.

Day one after the treatment I experience significant soreness in both knees. The soreness was different from the pain I had become accustomed to. I assumed this was due to the injections. The soreness became gradually less serious as the day progressed. In the afternoon I walked in the pool and both knees felt good—no discomfort. Later in the day I occasionally felt a sharp pain on the inside of the left knee by the ligaments. This was similar to the pain I had been experiencing before the injections. I also had some occasional pain in the front of both knees. There were also moments where each knee felt even less stable than before.

Day two after the treatment the general soreness I experienced the first day was almost entirely gone. Most of the time, both knees felt wonderful. I continued to feel an occasional sharp pain on the inside of my left knee as well as in front of each knee. During the afternoon, I walked about a half mile along the beach, the longest walk I'd taken in over a month. The knees felt more stable than the previous day. The only discomfort was from occasional sharp pains in the front or side of the left knee. These were similar to what I had experienced before the therapy.

Day three started off as the best one yet. The knees felt so strong I decided to return to my Tai Chi exercises. These involve alternatively placing all weight on one leg while slowly kicking out with the other leg. I was able to complete the exercise with much of my stability restored. However, later in the day, the knees were sore and both felt tight, as if there was some inflammation.

Days four and five confirmed I overdid it with my exercise. The knees were very sore and still had occasional sharp pains. Even so, I walked in the pool and walked about a half mile in the sand.

Day six started off with walking a mile on the beach. For most of the day the tightness in the knee continued along with a few sharp pains. However, late in the afternoon there was a period where the knees again felt normal with no pain and no tightness. I'm encouraged that they are getting better.

The improvement continued through day seven. I still get an occasional pain, but they are few and far between.

A week after therapy, I feel confident things are moving in the direction of a complete recovery.