

The Mexican Stem Cell Adventure

Part 3: Setbacks & Recovery

The first week after my stem cell therapy included both highs and lows. Little did I know at the time, but this forward and back pattern would continue for the first seven weeks.

Week 1: The first week began with the excitement of being able to walk for miles and return to my exercise routine. The intense knee pain I previously experienced was almost completely gone. The lows came after realizing I had overdone it. Both knees became very sore. While the soreness was different from the pain I had previously experienced, it was discouraging.

Week 2: By the end of my second week after therapy I was only able to walk only about 200 yards along the beach before my left knee became tight and very sore. My first thought was—this thing isn't working. I was anxious for a two-week checkup.

When I told Dr. Victor what was happening, he said I had done a number of things wrong. He explained how millions of stem cells were hard at work rebuilding bone, cartilage and ligaments. This rebuilding process would continue for eight to twelve weeks. In the early stages, the new cells were immature. They were soft and fragile. Walking in the pool or on level ground was fine. Walking in sand or on slopes would place a strain on the newly developed cells. He told me to avoid any type of vigorous exercise until the new cells had fully matured.

Victor explained how the tightness in my knee was due to inflammation from overworking the newly built cells. He prescribed an anti-inflammatory medicine and assured me I had not done any permanent damage. He cautioned me to go slow until the newly created were fully developed.

My wife, who was listening to the doctor's comments, was quick to remind me that she had been giving me similar advice—walk in the pool, not the sand, go easy on exercises. After 52 years of marriage, I never cease to be impressed by how wives are not only always right, but by how often they are able to remind us of how right they have been. After taking the anti-inflammatory medicine, the discomfort subsided.

Week 3: The third week after treatment I limited my walking mostly to the pool. For the second time since the therapy, my knees felt wonderful. In fact, they felt so good I continued walking in the pool for about an hour—another big mistake. The tightness (inflammation) in my left knee returned. Dr. Victor told me to take anti-inflammatory medicine and reduce my walking. He wanted me to get the inflammation down and then to keep it down without any medication. Only then should I resume placing any further strain on the knees.

Week 4: Week four after the therapy was going well. I limited my walking in the pool to only about 15 minutes, stopped taking anti-inflammatory medicine. The knees both felt great. Just when everything appeared to be going so well, there was another setback.

Week 5: For no apparent reason, at the beginning of week five, I suddenly experienced a sharp pain throughout my left knee. While it only lasted for about 15 seconds, I was concerned. The

knee pain returned several times during the day and both knees felt different. The left knee again felt tight and both knees felt weaker than before.

At the end of the fifth week I woke up on Saturday with both tightness and a slight pain on the inside of the left knee. I also began to experience some pain during the night while sleeping. It didn't help any that I had walked about 3 miles on each of the past two days. I called Victor. He proscribed a stronger anti-inflammatory and told me to see him as soon as I could.

Week 6: On week six Dr. Victor examined the left knee by twisting and turning it in different directions. Nothing hurt. I asked him if I might need additional stem cells. He said no. not at all. The bad left knee was stable and much improved. The stem cells had worked even better than he had expected.

He placed his finger in the inside of my knee joint and said I now had a large gap where there had previously been only bone rubbing against bone. He also noticed how the knee cap on my left knee was no longer locked in place. It was able to move. This was another good sign.

He injected ozone into the inside ligaments on the left knee to accelerate the healing process. I had read about the healing effects of ozone injections and was encouraged he was using it.

At my request, he scheduled an ultra-sound for that afternoon. The ultra-sound confirmed his physical exam. It showed about a ¼" gap in the left knee where there was previously bone on bone. It showed a previously torn meniscus had completely healed. In addition, loose pieces of cartilage were all gone, replaced by new cartilage.

Dr. Victor told me the discomfort I was feeling was pain was due to the ligament still being slightly inflamed. He recommended more anti-inflammatory medicine. Each following day there was less and less discomfort in the knee and less feeling of tightness.

Week 7: It's now week seven and most of the time both knees feel fine. Occasionally, they feel a bit weaker than I would like. And I still feel a slight tinge of pain by the inside ligament in the left knee. I'm off the anti-inflammatory medicine.

At this point, my overall assessment is positive. I'm convinced my attempts to do too much too soon set back my recovery. There is no pain at night and the occasional discomfort I feel is insignificant compared to the pain I was in before receiving stem cell therapy.

At this point the knees don't feel strong enough for me to place any undo strain on them. I'm determined not to make the same mistake I made earlier in my recovery. Regardless of how good my knees may feel, and most of the time they feel pretty good, I'll wait a full twelve weeks before attempting to jog, play golf, or put any additional pressure the knees.

Dr. Victor says I will be able to do all of these things once the cells mature. Five weeks from now I'll report back on the extent to which his prognosis is correct.