

REACHING FOR A CURE



JAMES QUIGG, DAILY PRESS

SUCCESSFUL TREATMENT: Holly Huber became a world traveler to get stem cell therapy in Costa Rica, which is not approved in the United States. The treatment made such a drastic improvement to her multiple sclerosis that her father, Larry Huber, is looking into the process to treat his diabetes.

Adult stem cell treatment gives multiple sclerosis patient new life

BY PATRICK THATCHER
STAFF WRITER

APPLE VALLEY • Fatigue, blurred vision, immobility, numbness and bladder control problems. For Holly Huber, that was life with multiple sclerosis.

Symptoms of the degenerative disease became so chronic and unbearable that Huber, a Victor Valley native now living in San Diego, could no longer work.

As part of her treatment she had to give herself daily injections of potent drugs in a futile effort to fight the disease. Even with medical insurance she was still paying \$1,450 a month for medication that she said was becoming less effective each month.

"I could tell my legs were getting weaker, and my balance and eyesight

What are stem cells?

Stem cells are the origin of all cells in the body (every cell "stems" from this type). Stem cells have the remarkable potential to develop into many different cell types in the body.

Stem cells are basically a repair system for the body. They can theoretically divide without limit to replenish other cells as long as the person is still alive.

When a stem cell divides, each new cell has the potential to either remain a stem cell or become another type of cell with a more specialized function, such as

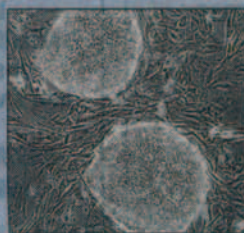


IMAGE COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF HEALTH

A microscopic view of adult stem cells.

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Press Dispatch | Page edited by Sheila Rowland

FROM THE FRONT

TREATMENT: Became her own health care advocate

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was getting worse," Huber said. "I really felt that I needed to be aggressive with my health care so that I didn't end up being permanently disabled."

Huber fought back. The 36-year-old business owner became her own medical advocate and started researching various therapies. She tried

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HOLLY HUBER

alternative therapies like acupuncture, yoga and diet. Then she stumbled upon an adult stem cell procedure only available overseas.

She talked with other MS patients who said they had great success after being treated at The Institute for Cellular Medicine in San Jose, Costa Rica.

Not wanting to wait for FDA approval for the

procedure in the United States, last fall Huber made a life-changing trip to Costa Rica. Over the span of 30 days, she received eight injections of adult stem cells extracted from donated umbilical cords and two intravenous injections of stem cells taken from her own fat tissue. She also did physical therapy four times a week.

"By the end of my stay my balance and strength dramatically improved, my bladder issues were gone and sensation had begun to return in my hands and feet," she said.

Her father, Larry Huber, describes himself as the "happiest father in the world." Now he is looking into adult stem cell therapy for his diabetes.

Holly Huber said the institute was immaculate and equipped with the latest medical technology that would rival any large U.S. health care facility.

Following the treatment she said her improvement was astonishing.

The treatment was



PHOTO COURTESY OF HOLLY HUBER

GETTING READY: Holly Huber gets ready for her stem cell treatment at The Institute for Cellular Medicine in San Jose, Costa Rica.

not cheap, but Huber says nothing related to her multiple sclerosis has been cheap since she was diagnosed in 2004. Patients pay anywhere from \$15,000 to \$32,000 for stem cell treatment, but Huber says it is worth it.

"It gave me a new life, a new future," she said. "I'm starting my life over at 36."

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STEM CELLS

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a muscle cell, a red blood cell or a bone cell.

Stem cells offer the possibility of a renewable source of replacement cells and tissues to treat a myriad of diseases, conditions and disabilities, including Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injuries, burns, heart disease, diabetes and arthritis.

Source: National Institutes of Health