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Kansas Senate Health Committee hearing

Testimony by:

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Most medical and nursing schools have no lectures about stem cell therapies. The medical literature and the few available CME (continuing medical education) events tend to focus on basic science rather than clinical trials or actual therapies. Outlandish claims made in the media a few years ago during an effort to promote embryonic stem cell research has lead to a backlash in the medical literature such that any talk of treatments or cures is minimized. This means most healthcare providers are unaware of available stem cell therapies or locally-enrolling human clinical trails which might help their patients.

There are some currently available stem cell therapies which have helped individuals with certain disorders. At the same time there are some charlatans are out there separating desperate people from their money by offering totally unproven "stem cell" treatments. This has lead to a murky reputation for all stem cell treatments among doctors, most of whom are likely to warn their patients away from any such therapy.

Part of the Midwest Stem Cell Therapy Center mission would be education for the general public and physicians alike. One aspect of that education would be an unbiased "consumer reports" type website, which would investigate, evaluate, and report on therapeutic stem cell claims. This would clear things up and inform healthcare providers and the public about real treatments they were previously unaware of, while steering them clear of the fakes. No such clearing house of information currently exists, and yet is sorely needed. Kansas could take world leadership with such website. Consumer advocacy groups, disease specific organizations (Alzheimer's Association, Parkinson's Foundation, etc.), state and local medical societies (MD and DO), nursing organizations, medical school(s), and universities would be delighted with such a resource.

Another aspect of the Center's educational mission would be training Kansas doctors and nurses about available legitimate stem cell treatment options via CME events where invited stem cell researchers and doctors from Kansas and around the world would speak. The goal would be to have the best informed group of healthcare providers on this topic of any state or country right here in Kansas.

Finally, the Center would educate doctors around the state about every currently-enrolling, FDA-approved stem cell human therapy trial, to give patients a real chance to participate. Kansas would become synonymous in the US with legitimate stem cell treatments and ... hope.

Many neurologic diseases are thought to be good targets for stem cell research & potential therapy. Huntington's Disease, Parkinson's Disease, inborn errors of metabolism (like Pelizaeus-Merzbacher disease), MS (multiple sclerosis), ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease), and, to a lesser extent, spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury, epilepsy, and (less promising) Alzheimer's Disease. My patient's could sure use the help.

Dana Winegarner, D.O.