**EMBARGOED UNTIL 23rd OCTOBER 2017**

**MEDIA CALL:  MELBOURNE STEM CELL CENTRE**

**MONDAY OCTOBER 23rd, 2017 10.00 A.M.**

**SUITE 2.01 LEVEL 2**

**116-118 THAMES ST.**

**BOX HILL, VICTORIA  3129**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL CASE REPORTS: PATIENT SHOWS EVIDENCE OF CARTILAGE REPAIR IN MELBOURNE STEM CELL CENTRE TRIAL**

**http://casereports.bmj.com/content/2017/bcr-2017-220852.full.pdf**

The British Medical Journal has published a case report of an injured Melbourne athlete who underwent stem cell therapy. The case study observed significant cartilage repair and pain relief and return to full function following a severe traumatic knee injury.

The BMJ Case Reports paper describes the experience of 26-year-old Victorian karate champion and personal trainer, Stephenie Harris. Stephanie underwent mesenchymal stem cell therapy in 2016 following a traumatic knee injury in the National Karate Championships.

As a result of the injury, Stephenie had a large cartilage fragment dislodged within her knee joint. After the injury she was unable to kneel or walk up stairs without suffering considerable pain. While surgery had successfully removed the cartilage fragment, Stephenie said surgery had “not helped with pain or movement”.

Associate Professor Julien Freitag, Head Researcher at The Melbourne Stem Cell Centre, said the stem cells were harvested from Stephenie’s own body with Stephenie undergoing a small liposuction procedure to harvest abdominal fat - a surprisingly rich source of stem cells.

**“**The stem cells were isolated and expanded from the abdominal fat in Melbourne-based clinical laboratory, Magellan Stem Cells. The process of isolating and expanding the stem cells took eight weeks to achieve a therapeutic dose. The stem cells also underwent important quality control measures to confirm cell viability and sterility,” he said.

A year after treatment, the BMJ reports that Stephenie was found to have significant pain and functional improvements. Repeat imaging showed evidence of complete repair of the cartilage injury.

The British Medical Journal report concluded that “Mesenchymal Stem Cell therapy may offer an exciting potential in the treatment of chondropathology (cartilage damage)”.

Associate Professor Freitag said the long-term patient outcomes in Melbourne Stem Cell trials has been extremely encouraging and “confirms that the promised potential of regenerative stem-cell therapies is now closer to reality.”

Associate Professor Freitag added: “Stephenie’s story is one of many positive patient stories to emerge during Melbourne Stem Cell Centre trials”.

“In cases of isolated cartilage damage – including Stephenie’s – we have seen robust regeneration of normal-like cartilage with near complete reversal of cartilage damage.

“Importantly, while these results are ground-breaking,they have not occurred for all patients to this degree.  This highlights the need to continue research, not only to improve techniques but also to identify patients who may best benefit from such therapies.

“At Melbourne Stem Cell Centre, stem cells are analysed to ensure they meet international standards and further tested for sterility and viability. This takes up to eight weeks and cannot be achieved with same-day procedures.”

“Potential patients are advised to only see medical professionals who are specialists in osteoarthritis and other musculoskeletal disorders", Associate Professor Freitag said.

“Where possible, they should only consider involvement in ethics-approved research in which participants provide formal informed consent and where results are strictly followed-up.

‘The potential for stem-cell technologies to help patients is still being explored and Melbourne Stem Cell Centre is conducting ongoing research to see how stem cells can help people with musculoskeletal complaints.”

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