
ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

MEDIA RELEASE



Are stem cells a viable treatment option for knee osteoarthritis?

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Treatment of osteoarthritis (OA) utilising mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs) has become a focus of interest according to a report in the latest issue of the *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Surgery (ANZJS)*, the peer-review publication of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS).

OA is a degenerative disease that causes pain, stiffness and decreased function and the article poses the question—could the use of MSCs be a legitimate treatment option?

The report suggests that the successful regeneration of cartilage could represent a new minimally invasive, non-surgical alternative to microfracture and subchondral drilling.

Presently, there are various treatment options for OA including those that are reserved for defects less than 2-3cm² and in patients younger than 40 years of age.

MSCs are adult stem cells found in human tissue including bone marrow and fatty tissue (adipose).

Once matured, the stem cells are injected into the damaged joint or embedded into the area of defect.

According to the article patients have reported improvement in symptoms using this method.

Authors of a study mentioned in the article have reported encouraging results from the use of MSCs with platelet-rich-plasma and arthroscopic lavage or cleansing, however say that it is not possible to determine whether the improvements are due to the MSCs alone.

Implantation of MSCs might be a viable treatment alternative for patients suffering from knee OA, but the authors say there is no published clinical data on the long-term outcomes and complications of this treatment or the ideal dose of MSC therapy.

Some Australian clinics are reportedly using MSC therapy to treat advanced knee OA although the issue of safety has not yet been established and the National Medical Research Council has so far not recommended the use of MSCs for the treatment of knee OA.

The article says that patients ultimately need to make their own informed decisions and medical practitioners have a responsibility to ensure that patients understand the potential risks prior to any treatment.

[Read the full article here](#)

The ANZ Journal of Surgery, published by Wiley-Blackwell, is the pre-eminent surgical journal published in Australia, New Zealand and the South-East Asian region for the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. The Journal is dedicated to the promotion of outstanding surgical practice, and research of contemporary and international interest.



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RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.

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