

I am a patient at the Melbourne Stem Cell Centre in Box Hill, Victoria, and am truly grateful to my doctor for referring me there, for the management of my arthritis, and pain in my knees. I welcome the opportunity to provide input to the TGA's Consultation regarding regulation of autologous stem cells. I understand the government would wish to ensure that this therapy, and research in this area is appropriate and safe.

I am in the medical industry and have been seriously thinking of autologous stem cell treatment for my knees over the past few years, but was hesitant as I thought there were too many "cowboys" out there doing this, and I can see why the TGA would want to regulate to make sure this procedure is being done in accordance with good policies and protocols.

A few years ago my orthopaedic surgeon told me I had "bone on bone" in both knees, but let's see how long we can wait for knee replacements. When I decided to go ahead with autologous stem cell therapy, and part of the protocol was to have an arthroscope and microfracture to my knee, he said this treatment might only give me 10 years before I needed new knees. This 10 years is precious to me as I have a very demanding sole trader business, which does not allow me weeks off for post op care, and in 10 years time when I am 70, I will be retired and can then opt for new knees.

I have now grown cartilage in both knees and am thrilled that this has been possible. Because of these trials my quality of life will now improve, as I will be able to walk longer distances (previously about 100 metres) without knee pain and having to continually rest due to this.

I have received excellent treatment at the Melbourne Stem Cell Centre. Every step of my treatment has been performed in sterile theatre conditions and Dr Julien Freitag has excellent qualifications in this field.

I understand that Australia is one of the few countries in the world where this work is being done and patients are being helped by it, so surely that is a big positive.

I realise this research and therapy is cutting edge, but so have many other procedures and therapies through the years, and if we didn't have research in all areas medicine would still be in the dark ages.

So please, in your consultation with the Government on this autologous stem cell therapy, take into account how much is being done by reputable doctors in this field, and how many patients are being helped, who would otherwise be living with crippling side effects of their arthritis.

As a patient, I trust that these considerations will be reflected by the Consultation and its outcomes in a way that does not deny patients access to treatments that may have significant benefits.

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