

SCRIPTING MEDICAL HISTORY

Stem cell cure for incurable blindness

Subhendu Maiti

■ letters@hindustantimes.com

KOLKATA: A Chennai-based hospital claims to have created medical history by employing stem cell therapy to bring back a 22-year-old patient of optical atrophy from complete blindness to more than 90% vision.

Optical atrophy is an incurable disease that damages the eye's optic nerves.

Twenty-two-year-old US-based Mukund Patil (name changed on request) suffered from optical atrophy and lost his vision about two and a half months ago after accidental

consumption of methanol.

"The patient's MRI showed that his optic nerves were badly damaged. I injected two units of stem cells collected from his bone marrow three weeks ago.

It gave positive results. Gradually, his vision was restored," Himanshu Bansal, a Nainital-based researcher in stem cell therapy, told *HT* from Chennai on Tuesday, elaborating, "I injected 360 million stem cells on the first day, applying the retro bulber technique. A day later, I administered the second unit of stem cells."

The result: Patil, who could not even see his own hand, now

watches television. The cost of the therapy was ₹80,000.

"Just as you can't infuse life into the dead, you can't restore the vision of an optical atrophy patient. It would be a miracle if it has happened," said Professor Himadri Dutta of the Regional Institute of Ophthalmology in Kolkata.

After the treatment, Patil was taken to a reputed retina foundation centre in Chennai for a visual evoke potential test. This is the final confirmatory test to check the optic nerve. "The test showed that Patil has got back 90% of his vision. This is quite a miracle," said Bansal.

VISION MISSION



- A Nainital-based stem cell therapy researcher claimed that he had cured a patient of optical atrophy, an incurable disease that damages the eye's optic nerves leading to complete blindness
- Treatment comprised injecting stem cells collected from bone marrow into the patient