

British scientists create nerve stem cells

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Scientists at the Universities of Edinburgh and Milan reportedly made the world's first pure nerve stem cells from human embryonic stem cells.

Researchers told the BBC they hope the newly-created cells will eventually assist scientists in finding new treatments for diseases such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

Stem cells are so-called "master" cells that can become many kinds of tissue. Nerve stem cells are those that help build the brain and central nervous system.

Steven Pollard of the University of Edinburgh told the BBC: "This is incredibly exciting in terms of curing disease. We may be able to create the disease in a dish. If we do that, we'll be able to better understand the disease and also to test drugs."

Although the long-term goal is to use the artificially created cells to treat such illnesses as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, the short-term use will be to test the effectiveness of newly created drugs.

University of Edinburgh Professor Austin Smith, who led the research, told the BBC, "We're already talking with the bio-technology and bio-pharmaceutical companies about taking these cells into screening systems for new drugs."

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