

Stem cells to be injected into the heart

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The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center will begin a clinical trial to determine the feasibility of injecting a patient's own stem cells into the heart.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has granted approval for the trial that would have a patient's own bone marrow-derived stem cells directly injected into the heart during conventional heart bypass surgery.

The trial will involve patients with ischemic heart disease who are scheduled for off-pump -- beating heart -- coronary artery bypass grafting surgery. In addition to assessing the safety and feasibility of using a patient's own stem cells as a potential therapy for heart disease, researchers also will be trying to determine how many stem cells are needed to produce the best results.

Various studies conducted around the world, including a limited number performed in the United States, have suggested when patients with heart failure receive stem cells taken from their bone marrow, their hearts show signs of improved function and recovery.

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