

First stem cells injected into brains

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A clinical trial in Oregon will explore the safety of injecting human stem cells directly into the brain to treat fatal pediatric neurodegenerative disorder.

The groundbreaking trial at Doernbecher Children's Hospital at Oregon Health & Science University will test whether HuCNS-SC(TM), a proprietary human central nervous stem cell product is safe, and whether it can slow the progression of two forms of devastating illness known as Batten disease, according to StemCells, Inc. of Palo Alto, Calif.

"While the preclinical research in the laboratory and in animals is promising, it is important to note that this is a safety trial and, to our knowledge, purified neural stem cell transplantation has never been done before," said Robert D. Steiner, vice chairman of pediatric research and the study's principal investigator.

"It is our hope that stem cells will provide an important therapeutic advance for these children who have no other viable options," Steiner said.

Up to six children from Oregon or around the country will undergo transplantation at Doernbecher. StemCells, Inc. received clearance from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in October 2005.

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