

# Medical TRIBUNE

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## Fears rise over bogus stem cell clinics

Kymory Alger

International experts have warned about bogus stem cell clinics fearing that patients could be exploited and, in response, have launched a multipronged attack to combat the threat.

The rogue clinics may be luring unproven stem cell therapies and charging vulnerable patients as much as US\$2.1M, with little regard to informing them of the risks involved, warn researchers.

"It's just a matter of time before somebody gets hurt and it brings down the field," said Associate Professor Insoo Hyun, one of the 20 strong task force members behind the release of the first ever guidelines for clinical stem cell research.

"In some of these cases, I don't think they're even using real cells – they might just be giving patients stem treatments," added Hyun, who is a bioethics expert from Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, US.

The Guidelines for the Clinical Translation of Stem Cells, released by the International Society for Stem Cell Research (ISSCR), outlines international standards and outlines recommendations to promote "the responsible translation of stem cell research" into clinically effective therapies.



Many guidelines outline international standards and outline recommendations to promote the responsible translation of stem cell research.

The set of principles and professional standards were agreed upon by international experts, representing 17 countries, with additional comment and review by key stakeholders around the world.

Researchers from Singapore's newly established Stem Cell Society are also putting their support behind the ISSCR guidelines.

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## Evidence-based TCM makes headway

Richard Philip

The world's first medication known to improve stroke recovery is based on Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), thanks to the approach of testing TCM in Western-style clinical trials.

Neuroaid™, a stroke drug formulated from natural ingredients used in Chinese medicine, was developed to aid post-stroke recovery and has recently been approved for use in seven countries including Singapore.

The formula has shown efficacy in reducing stroke-induced disabilities and is currently undergoing a large randomized multicenter trial driven from Singapore.

The Chinese Medicine Neuroaid Efficacy on Stroke Recovery (CHIMES) trial will determine whether the drug, if given within 48 hours of stroke onset, is superior to placebo in reducing neurological deficits and in improving the functional outcome of patients.



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Evidence-based TCM has yielded the world's first stroke recovery medication.

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# Medical terminology alters public perceptions of disease

Ulrich Hoyer

Using words of language instead of the words of the language is a disease management strategy whether the disease is perceived to be acute or chronic.

Recent changes in language referring to neurological conditions—like multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's disease, and Huntington's disease—have led to a re-evaluation of the words used to describe these conditions. The words used to describe these conditions are not just words, but they are words that carry a heavy burden.

The word "multiple" has come to be associated with a wide range of conditions that share some common features. It is a word that has been used to describe a wide range of conditions, from multiple sclerosis to multiple myeloma.

According to the researchers, the words "multiple" and "disease" together are a combination of two words that are both "disease" and "multiple." The word "disease" is a word that is used to describe a condition that is not just a word, but it is a word that carries a heavy burden.

These words may appear to be one of the most common words used in the medical language, but they are words that carry a heavy burden. The words "multiple" and "disease" are words that carry a heavy burden.

Multiple sclerosis, for example, has been described as a disease that is not just a word, but it is a word that carries a heavy burden. The words "multiple" and "disease" are words that carry a heavy burden.

The researchers say that the word "multiple" is the most common word used to describe a wide range of conditions. The word "multiple" is a word that carries a heavy burden.

Both "multiple" and "disease" are words that carry a heavy burden. The words "multiple" and "disease" are words that carry a heavy burden. The words "multiple" and "disease" are words that carry a heavy burden.

The use of words like "multiple" and "disease" is a word that carries a heavy burden. The words "multiple" and "disease" are words that carry a heavy burden.

Other words, such as "stroke" and "heart disease," are words that carry a heavy burden. The words "stroke" and "heart disease" are words that carry a heavy burden.

The influence of terminology on disease perception has been studied by the researchers. The words "multiple" and "disease" are words that carry a heavy burden.

"Medical language is not just a word," said Hoyer, "it is the language of medicine. The language of medicine is a word that carries a heavy burden.

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Researcher's findings on disease perception have led to a re-evaluation of the words used to describe these conditions. The words "multiple" and "disease" are words that carry a heavy burden.

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"Stroke is the main cause of adult disabilities and two-thirds of stroke sufferers make an incomplete recovery. Beyond thrombolysis with a recombinant tissue plasminogen activator (r-tPA) for a small number of patients within 4.5 hours of stroke, there is no medicine available to date that enhances recovery," said Mr. David Picard, CEO of the Singapore-based pharmaceutical company that makes the drug.

Thus far, 53 molecules have been tried in over 150 trials and have failed, and the pharmaceutical pipeline is not likely to produce a new drug in the foreseeable future, said Picard.

"The most frequent question from patients is, 'when am I going to be able to do what I did yesterday?'" added Picard, underscoring the fact that the evidence-based approach to TCM could address needs that Western medicine has failed to meet.

Dr. Charles Siow, a consultant neurologist and pain specialist at the Siow Neurology Headache and Pain Centre, Mount Alvernia Hospital, Singapore, agreed with Picard. "Neuroaid is one of the first TCM medications to be put under the microscope of rigidly-controlled clinical trials, similar to what is used for traditional Western medicines, and its success will open the door to more of such studies," he said.

Siow did a retrospective case study on the drug, which was recently published in *European Neurology*. His study involved 10 patients who took Neuroaid after ischemic stroke onset. All of them reported improvements. Six patients achieved full recovery, three of them showed good or moderate recovery and one patient experienced poor recovery. Substantial improvements were noted in motor, visual, speech and cognitive functions. [*Eur Neurol* 2008;60:264-266]

Using TCM in modern medical practice brings up the challenge of having to convince Western practitioners about its value. Evaluating TCM with robust Western clinical methods would address the skepticism from Western practitioners, said Picard.

Providing an overview of the process whereby TCM is passed through the Western research model Picard said that after potential active chemical compounds in TCM are identified, researchers establish their biological mechanisms in animals and identify their targets in particular human diseases. "The process is supported by full-fledged clinical trials carried out over a period of 10 to 12 years," he said.

# Caffeine in pregnancy restricts fetal growth, study warns

Ilana Holt

Consuming caffeine during pregnancy can significantly restrict the rate of fetal growth, according to a new study of pregnant women. The study found that women who consumed caffeine during pregnancy had babies who were significantly smaller than those who did not.

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The new study, which was led by the researchers, found that women who consumed caffeine during pregnancy had babies who were significantly smaller than those who did not. The study found that women who consumed caffeine during pregnancy had babies who were significantly smaller than those who did not.

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As a result of this study, researchers suggest that women who consume caffeine during pregnancy should be aware of the potential risks. The study found that women who consumed caffeine during pregnancy had babies who were significantly smaller than those who did not.

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