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Stem Cell Research

Recently, News 13 told you about Gerald Allen. He's the man who traveled to China for stem cell injections after being paralyzed in 2002.

As News 13's Nancy Gay explains one local university is bringing stem cell research to Orlando.

Three times a week Gerald Allen works with a physical therapist, strengthening his legs and core muscles.

He can stand with a little help, but notice how his legs shake.

"They're trying to work, but they aren't able to fire and control everything yet," physical therapist Ron Lau said.

Gerald says he feels stronger since getting umbilical cord stem cell injections in China several months ago.

"I just wish we could do it here in the states," Allen said.

UCF Biomedical Professor Kiminobu Sugaya says research projects are in the works here in Orlando.

He says there are several types of stem cells - embryonic, fetal, adult, and umbilical cord.

"Embryonic stem cell, you can create any type of tissue, but gradually a stem cell becomes a certain type of stem cell," Sugaya said.

Professor Sugaya says that's one problem with umbilical cord stem cells. They are a lot like adult stem cells. Most are slated to become blood cells, bone cells or connective tissue, and sometimes the host body will attack them."

That's why Professor Sugaya is working on way to change that.

Sugaya said: "We treat the cells in a way they're going to forget what they become. Just erase the memory and that's first what we teach them and then we teach them what to become."

That type of advancement couldn't come soon enough for Gerald.

Gerald says he has a long road ahead, but believes there is hope out there.



That's a look at Your Health, . . .
Nancy Gay, Central Florida News 13.

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