

Bum knees? Sports stars like CC Sabathia find success in experimental stem cell treatments

CC Sabathia, a starting pitcher for the New York Yankees, is making \$23 million this year, and the same or more for at least the next two, maybe three years. But his knee hurts, which probably explains why he's been having a lousy season. It turns out that he has degenerative problems in his right knee, "which required a cortisone shot and stem cell injections."

Some stem cell treatments are controversial, and illegal in the U.S. (Why else would Texas-based Celltex now be treating U.S. patients in Mexico?) But the reinjection of adult stem cells extracted from your own bone marrow, and not altered, is in fact legitimate. How much that helps, and for what conditions, is another question. The evidence that it speeds up healing is "largely anecdotal in human patients."

The go-to guy for stem cell work seems to be Dr. James Andrews, of the Andrews Sports Medicine & Orthopaedic Center and the American Sports Medicine Institute. He is also an advisor to IntelliCel BioSciences, Inc. He's a 71-year-old orthopedic surgeon based in Birmingham, Alabama and Pensacola, Florida who is known to have worked on thousands of sports stars over the years.

The stem-cell approach to sports medicine is relatively new. ESPN [reported](#), in December 2012:

For the past three years, however, Andrews has been experimenting with a new strategy. "Stem cells," he says. "What we call biologics. They're on their way, and that will be a transformational event." Very quietly — "We don't advertise it," Andrews says, "and we don't want to sensationalize it" — he and his colleagues at clinics in Birmingham, Ala., and Gulf Breeze, Fla., have been performing stem cell injections on professional athletes. He won't name names, but Andrews has mostly employed stem cells in the deteriorated knees of football players, and virtually all of them have reported significant decreases in pain and inflammation. "It's early," he says, "but the results have been remarkable."

Read the full, original story: Stem Cells in Sports Medicine