

Stem cell-based treatment for autism is not ready for large-scale trial, warn experts

A team at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, is set to launch a \$40 million clinical trial to explore stem cells from umbilical cord blood as a treatment for autism. But experts caution that the trial is premature.

[...]

Early animal studies have shown that stem cells isolated from umbilical cord blood can stimulate cells in the spinal cord to regrow their myelin layers, and in doing so help restore connections with surrounding cells³. Autism is thought to result from impaired connectivity in the brain. Because of this, some groups of children with the disorder may benefit from a stem cell transplant, Kurtzberg says.

But others are skeptical of the approach. Autism is a complex disorder with many possible causes. Also, it's unclear how stem cells derived from cord blood can improve connections in the brain. Given these important caveats, it's too soon to conduct a test of this scale and investment, some experts say.

Read the full, original story: [Experts balk at large trial of stem cells for autism](#)