

Danger of unapproved stem cell therapies growing as clinics expand across US

More than 170 clinics across the country are selling experimental stem cell procedures for dozens of diseases and conditions — a mushrooming industry that has flourished despite little evidence of its safety or effectiveness.

The rise of the U.S. stem cell industry illustrates how quickly fringe medicine can outpace government oversight. Over the last five years, academic stem cell researchers have watched in dismay as doctors treat patients with experimental techniques that they say could take years, if not decades, to become sound medicine.

In 2010 there were only a handful of doctors promoting stem cell procedures in the U.S., mainly plastic surgeons promoting “stem cell facelifts” and other cosmetic procedures. But today there are clinics throughout the country promoting stem cells for dozens of conditions and diseases, including Alzheimer’s, arthritis, erectile dysfunction and hair loss. The cost of these procedures is high, ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000.

Many of the businesses are linked in large, for-profit chains which offer doctors the chance to join the franchise after taking a seminar and buying some equipment.

The largest of these chains is the Cell Surgical Network, co-founded in 2012 by Dr. Mark Berman, who spent 30 years as a Beverly Hills plastic surgeon before working with stem cells. His company offers stem cell procedures for more than 30 diseases and conditions, including Lou Gehrig’s disease, multiple sclerosis and arthritis. He and his partner adapted technology from Asia into a liposuction-based procedure in which fat is pumped out of patients’ abdomen, processed with drugs and equipment and then injected back into the body.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Stem cell ‘Wild West’ takes route amid lack of US regulation](#)