

### 3 women blinded after receiving stem cell therapy for macular degeneration

Three women suffered severe, permanent eye damage after [stem cells](#) were injected into their eyes, in an unproven treatment at a loosely regulated clinic in Florida, doctors reported [on March 15 in The New England Journal of Medicine].

One, 72, went completely blind from the injections, and the others, 78 and 88, lost much of their eyesight. Before the procedure, all had some visual impairment but could see well enough to drive.

The cases expose gaps in the ability of government health agencies to protect consumers from unproven treatments offered by entrepreneurs who promote the supposed healing power of stem cells.

The women had [macular degeneration](#), an eye disease that causes vision loss, and they paid \$5,000 each to receive stem-cell injections in 2015 at a private clinic in Sunrise, Fla...Staff members there used [liposuction](#) to suck fat out of the women's bellies, and then extracted stem cells from the fat to inject into the women's eyes.

...

Kristin C. Comella, the chief science officer of U.S. Stem Cell, said in an interview that the clinic did not need F.D.A. approval because it was treating patients with their own cells, which are not a drug.

NEJM a f x  
Image not found or type unknown

Photographs of a patient's eyes showing intraretinal hemorrhage after a stem cell procedure. Credit: The New England Journal of Medicine.

[The women] later told doctors they thought they were participating in government-approved research. But no study ever took place, and the proposed study on the site had no government endorsement. Clinical trials do not need government approval to be listed on the website. [The study can be found [here](#).]

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Patients Lose Sight After Stem Cells Are Injected Into Their Eyes](#)**