The promise of stem cell therapy in disease—review series

Historically, the QJM has published review articles on novel stroke therapies, on selected deficiencies where future stem cell therapies are briefly described.\textsuperscript{1,2} We felt that it was timely to launch a more definitive review series on stem cells and disease in the current issue. Guest Edited by Professor Stewart Forbes of the University of Edinburgh, it aims to provide an update on recent advances in our understanding of stem cell biology, tissue regeneration and organ repair mechanisms. In his introduction to the series, Professor Forbes highlights where conventional therapies have not addressed the disability of many chronic diseases and provides an overview of progress in regenerative medicine, which holds out the promise of improving the quality of life of patients with progressive chronic diseases.

The initial published review for this series focuses on cell therapies in type I diabetes. Subsequent reviews will provide overviews on stem cell therapy in the lung, liver, neuronal cells and joint disease. In type I diabetes, the requirement is for functioning $\beta$ cells that will produce appropriate levels of insulin in response to fluctuating blood sugar. The translational potential of this field is boosted by the ongoing clinical use of islet cell therapy. Here, islets are isolated from cadaveric donor pancreases and transplanted into recipient livers to treat hypoglycemic unawareness in type I diabetes. As in many types of cell and organ transplantation there is a dearth of suitable donors. Stem cell therapy could address this urgent clinical unmet need.

Von Hippel Landau Syndrome—a review

The QJM has a long history of publishing definitive reviews on rare diseases.\textsuperscript{3–5} We continue this tradition with a definitive review from O’Shea and colleagues on Von Hippel Lindau syndrome. They report on their experience as a national referral centre and highlight the potential under-diagnosis of the syndrome in the population at large. They highlight the importance of screening and define an appropriate screening protocol for physicians.

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References