

Italians report stem-cell advances

Italian scientists have reportedly made important advances in stem-cell research, specifically for kidney and liver disease.

The researchers say the cells appear able to turn into an array of other body cells, the Italian news agency ANSA reported. The scientists said their findings were made in adults, not using embryonic stem cells.

A Florence team led by immunologist Sergio Romagnani reported identifying kidney stem cells that can help damaged kidneys repair themselves.

Romagnani told a news conference the cells can be cultivated in the lab so as to "multi-differentiate" into other types of cells: bone cells, adipose cells and even nerve cells, offering the hope of reversing degenerative diseases that also affect kidneys, ANSA said.

The research appears in the Journal of the American Society of Nephrology.

Scientists in Turin announced a similar discovery involving adult stem cells in livers.

"The progenitor cells identified by our team are able to differentiate into liver cells, bone cells, blood cells and even pancreatic cells that produce insulin," lead researcher Benedetta Bussolati said.

The Turin study is detailed in the journal Stem Cells.

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