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Special Stem Cells Build 'Biological Bypass'

HealthDay

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Mon Aug 17, 7:03 pm ET

MONDAY, Aug. 17 (HealthDay News) -- U.S. researchers have identified stem cells that are able to grow new coronary arteries, a finding that could lead to new ways to treat atherosclerosis.

"We have defined this novel class of primitive cells and named them coronary vascular progenitor cells [CVPCs]. These cells possess all of the fundamental properties of stem cells and are distributed within niches located in the vessel wall of the entire human coronary circulation system," Dr. Piero Anversa, of Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, said in a hospital news release.

To test the activity of these cells, the scientists created a blockage in a coronary artery in dogs and injected human CVPCs in the blocked artery. After one month, the dogs showed improvements in blood flow and heart functioning. The researchers found that the dogs had grown large, intermediate and small human coronary arteries.

The findings suggest that the human heart contains a reservoir of CVPCs that can be used to create a biological bypass in patients with chronic [coronary artery disease](#) and ischemic [cardiomyopathy](#), which results when arteries that supply blood and oxygen to the heart are blocked.

"This therapeutic strategy could dramatically change the goal of cell therapy for the ischemic heart; prevention of myocardial injury would become the goal of cell therapy rather than the partial restoration of established damage," said Anversa, director of the Center for Regenerative Medicine at Brigham.

The study is scheduled to appear in this week's online issue of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

More information

The U.S. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute has more about [coronary artery disease](#).

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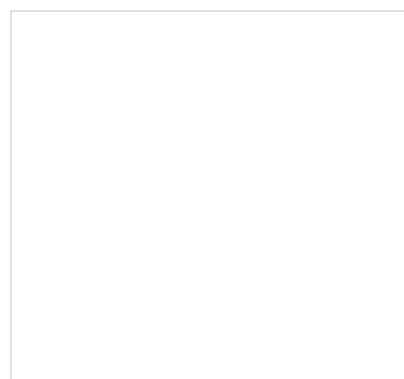
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