

## Warning over animal stem cell injections that claim to beat wrinkles

Doctors in Thailand have warned about potentially fatal results from a risky new beauty treatment – injecting animal stem cells into your face.

By Thomas Bell in Bangkok

Last Updated: 3:01PM GMT 22 Dec 2008

The therapy is illegal in the West, but according to the Thai newspaper The Nation patients are willing to pay between £2,000 to £20,000 in Bangkok to receive the treatment which is claimed to remove facial wrinkles.

"Some patients might go into [anaphylactic] shock after receiving several doses of animal stem cells, especially those who have hyper sensitive reactions," warned Dr Tanom Bunaprasert, a medical professor at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University.

Dr Tanom also pointed out that there is no proven medical benefit to the procedure. "The feeling of a younger face is caused by the placebo effect, not stem cells that are injected into their faces," he said.

Because the stem cells from an alien organism stimulate an antibody response from the human immune system, doctors say they massively increase the likelihood that the patient would reject a donor organ if they ever require a transplant in the future.

Other controversial stem cell therapies are also practised in Thailand. Experimental adult stem cell therapy for failing hearts and for peripheral artery disease caused by diabetes are both available only in Bangkok, and some doctors have questioned whether the procedures are a medical breakthrough or just a scam.

Thailand is a popular destination for "medical tourists" seeking often high-quality medical care that may be unavailable or more expensive in other countries.

Cosmetic surgery is a particular speciality and is widely advertised.

Advertisements claim that a full sex change procedure can be obtained for only around £3000.

Dr Tanom also warned against other supposedly stem cell based cosmetic treatments which are widely advertised in print and on the internet.

He said that animal stem cell based creams and lotions are of no possible benefit because the stem cells would die long before they are applied to the skin and, besides, stem cells are too large to penetrate the skin and have any effect.

Likewise, food products purporting to be beneficially enriched with animal stem cells are a fraud, he said.

"Stem cell food has very poor nutritious ingredients," according to Dr Tanom. "You eat numerous stem cells every day for a long time from meat, chicken, fish and pork but you don't know it."