

Stem Cell Research

A growing number of New Zealanders are being diagnosed with Diabetes. Type 2 diabetes is of particular concern as studies are showing that there need be no familial history or cultural predisposition to diabetes. Diabetes along with circulatory conditions make up a major cause of amputation in NZ.

Stem cell research is progressing rapidly. It is showing researchers how an organism develops from a single cell and how damaged cells are able to be replaced by healthy ones. Stem cells are those cells, which are unspecialised and capable of renewing themselves through cell division. From experiments to date it has been shown that these unspecialised stem cells may, given certain conditions develop into cells with special functions eg. insulin producing pancreatic cells. Researchers consider that this exciting area of research may lead to the possibility of cells being transplanted into people as a form of treatment for conditions such as diabetes.